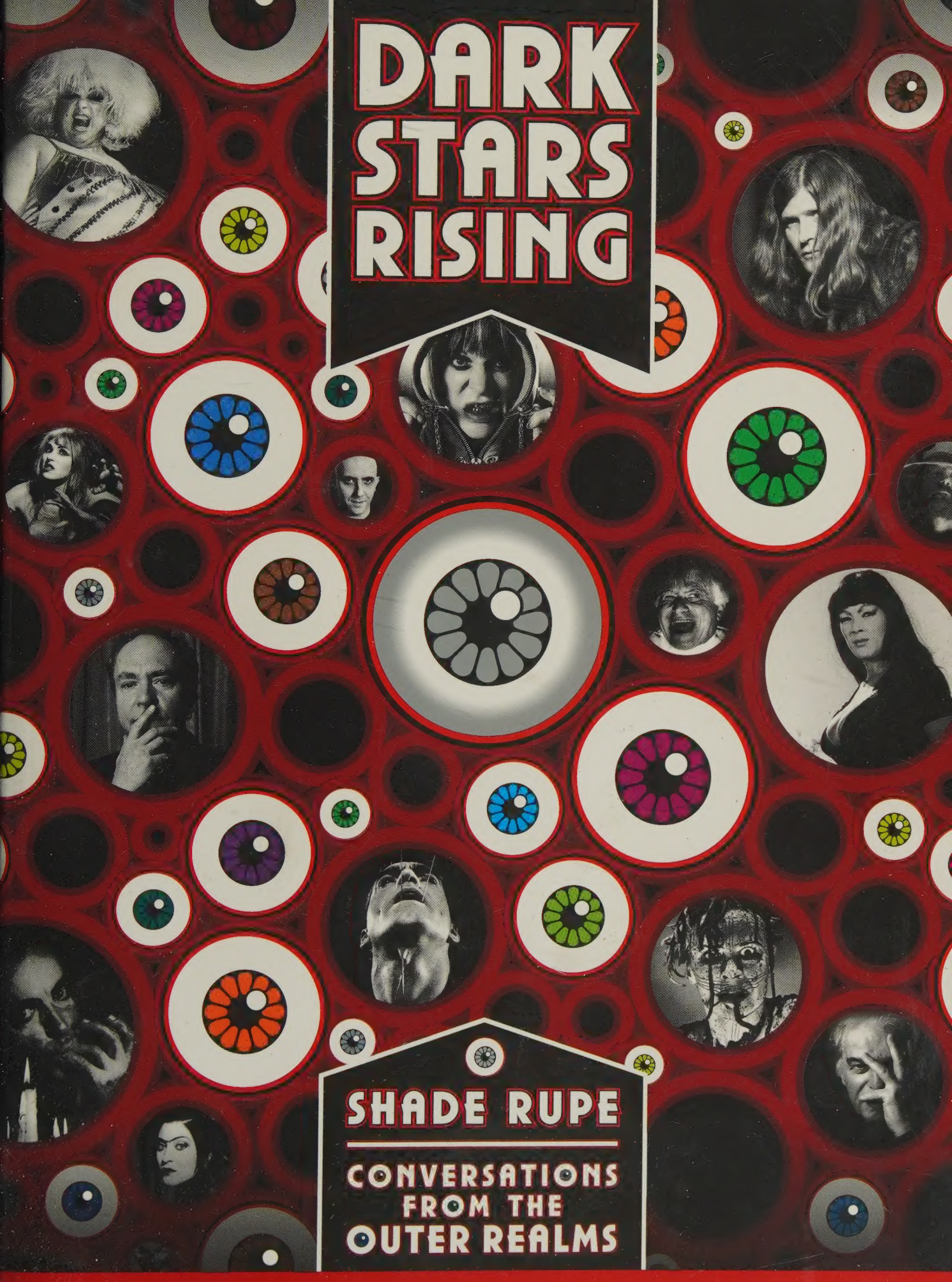

DARK STARS RISING

SHADE RUPE

CONVERSATIONS FROM THE OUTER REALMS

HEADPRESS

A HEADPRESS BOOK
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Conversations from the Outer Realms

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Page one image montage: *Elope* by Dame Darcy. Watercolor. From the *Dollerium* art book/DVD, Press Pop Tokyo, 2006. And a highly hallucinogenic scene from Gaspar Noé's *Enter the Void*.

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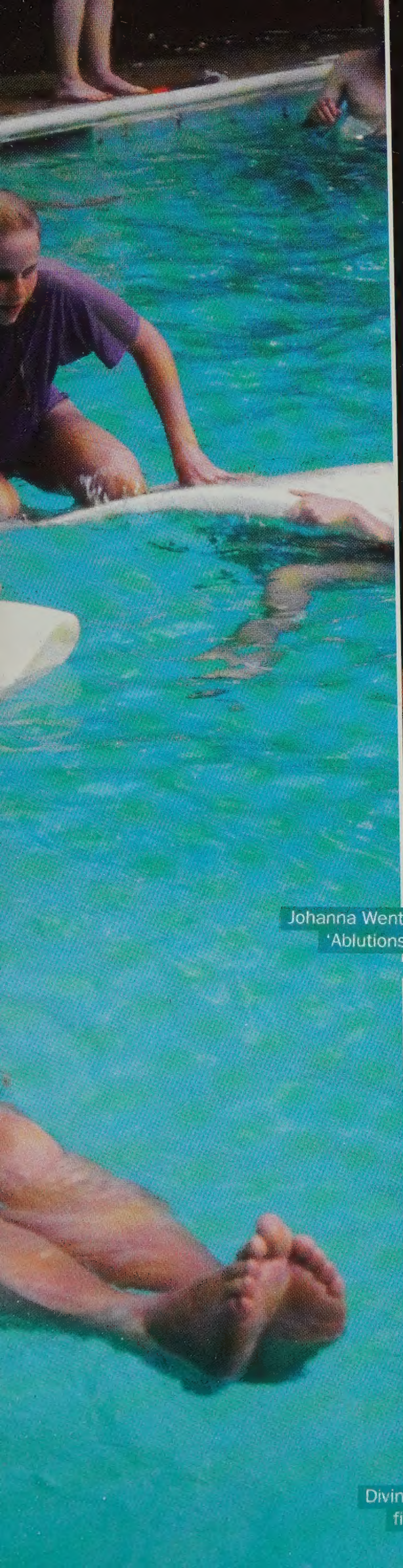
Self Portrait with cat, 1998. Courtesy Floria Sigismondi



Johanna Went joins the party in one of her fantastic creations for 'Ablutions of a Nefarious Nature', 2007. Photo Shade Rupe.

Divine at an afternoon party on a weekend away from filming *Hairspray*. Photos Henny Garfunkel, 1987.

Teller. Photo Bill Cramer.

DARK STARS RISING

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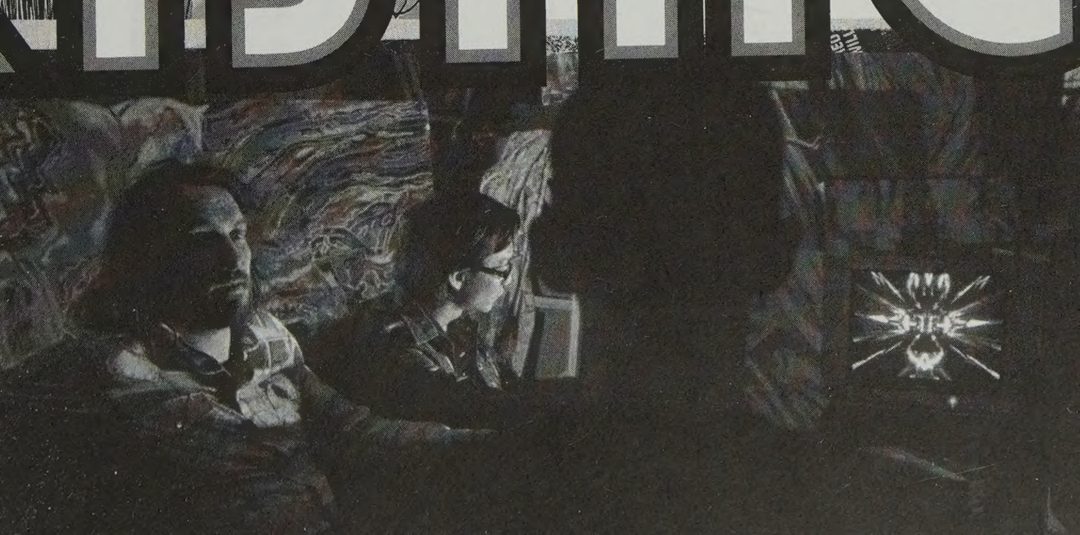
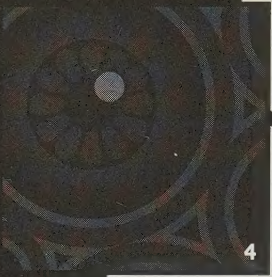
Conversations from the Outer Realms

by Shade Rupe

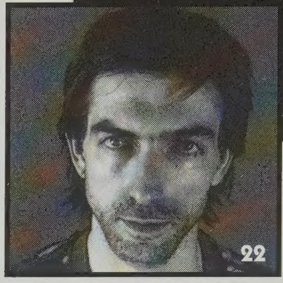
A Headpress Book



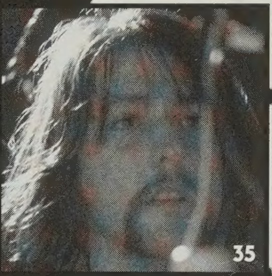


INTRODUCTION 4

DIVINE 6

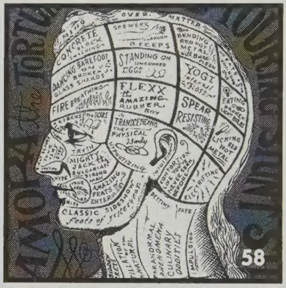


RICHARD KERN 22



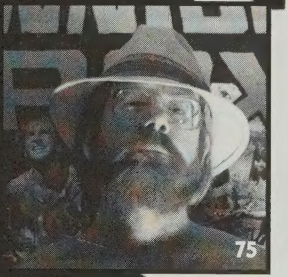
JIM VANBEBBER 35

JOHANNES SCHÖNHERR 46



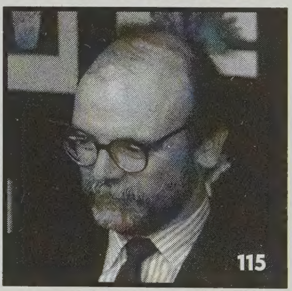
ZAMORA the TORTURE KING
TOURING SIDESHOWS
OVER MATTER
CONCRETE BLOCK
DANCING BAREFOOT
STANDING ON EGGS
FLEXX the AMAZING RUBBER BOY
FIRE BREATHING
SPEAR RESISTING
YOGI
TRANSCENDING THE PHYSICAL
CLASSIC SIDESHOW feats of yesteryear

ZAMORA, THE TORTURE KING 58

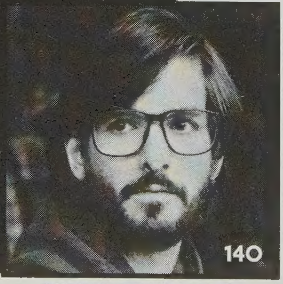


CHAS. BALUN 75

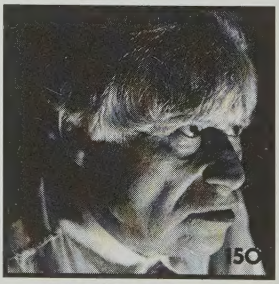
PETER SOTOS 101



DENNIS PAOLI 115



BUDDY GIOVINAZZO 140



BROTHER THEODORE 150

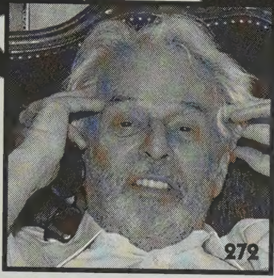
TELLER 162

WILLIAM LUSTIG 190

HERMANN NITSCH 205

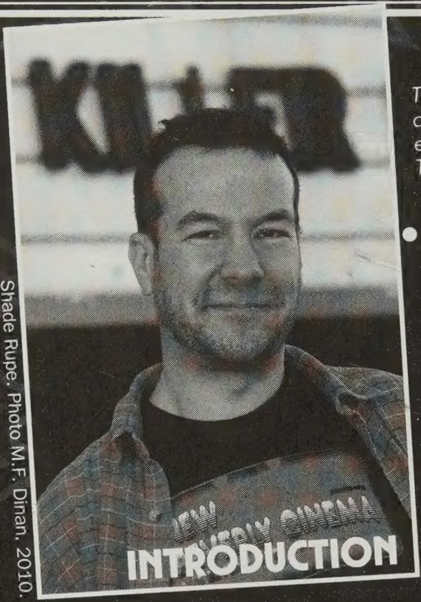
GENESIS BREYER P-ORRIDGE 226

TABLE OF CONTENTS



UDO KIER 249
ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY 272
FLORIA SIGISMONDI 296
DENNIS COOPER 314
ANDRE LASSEN 338
TURA SATANA 348
GASPAR NOÉ 376
ARNOLD DRAKE 401
RICHARD STANLEY 419
DAME DARCY 439
STEPHEN O'MALLEY 462
JOHANNA WENT 478
CRISPIN GLOVER 498
REVIEWS 517
INDEX 551

SHADE RUPE AUTHOR & INTERVIEWER



INTRODUCTION

Shade Rupe. Photo M.F. Dinan. 2010.

> *The joy of life consists in the exercise of one's energies, continual growth, constant change, the enjoyment of every new experience. To stop means simply to die. The eternal mistake of mankind is to set up an attainable ideal.*
>
> —Aleister Crowley

TRYING TO BE NUMBER ONE, TRYING TO BE a star, produces failure. Celebrities rise and fade. Success breeds contempt. The best you can do is be you. And each and every attendee to the party herein maintains a commitment to self over any other social ideal.

I feel quite lucky to have turned an interest in meeting fantastically creative people into my own adventure in self-discovery. Each meeting with remarkable men and women left my brain humming and zinging. It is with the thanks my brain gives to me that drives this book into existence.

Although most of these interviews did find their way into print through the pages of **Screem**, **Fun**, **Essential Cinema**, **Funeral Party**, **Panik**, and the online **Fears** magazines, they were truncated and lazily transcribed, and often salient information would fall by the wayside. Through the graces of the diligent staff of Purple Shark Transcriptions each microcassette and digital file was retranscribed, pulling out entire sections previously lost.

Sharing joy has been a lifelong passion. Show and tell was my favorite class. Herein lie terror and joy, pain and triumph, sex and apathy. The battle between commerce and art is a Sisyphean drama, yet every artist included here prevails throughout their lives. At the time I interviewed Divine he mentioned escaping the painful arena of poverty, the domain of many artists no matter how popular their artwork may appear. Some have been fortunate enough to maneuver inside the matrix of commercial enterprises to finance their own artworks, such as the brilliant Crispin Glover. Others are able to secure a home that acts as their own public theater, like the grand Hermann Nitsch. But most just create and create, bringing in strands of financial support while living the life they must live.

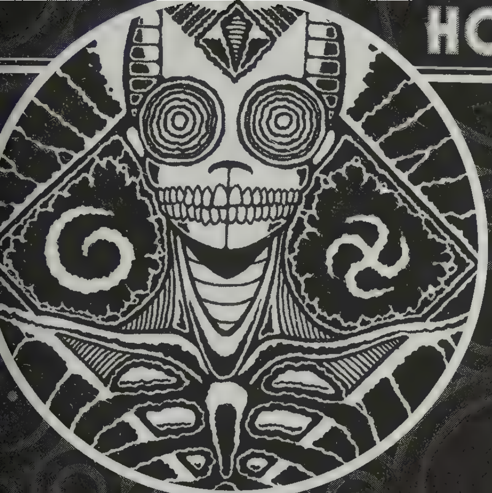
The creative impulse is a mystery to many whose minds have not been so triggered; the absolute need to create overriding all other basic social concerns. It brings me great pleasure to bring so many success stories to you, the reader of this book, and supporter of these lifestyles, of these grand men and women. No matter how difficult any of these artists' lives have been on their road to creative self-actualization, each and every one of them have succeeded, and left behind true legacies, whether they continue to create today or have already planted the seeds for future generations to discover and blossom forth on their own paths to fully and truly being.

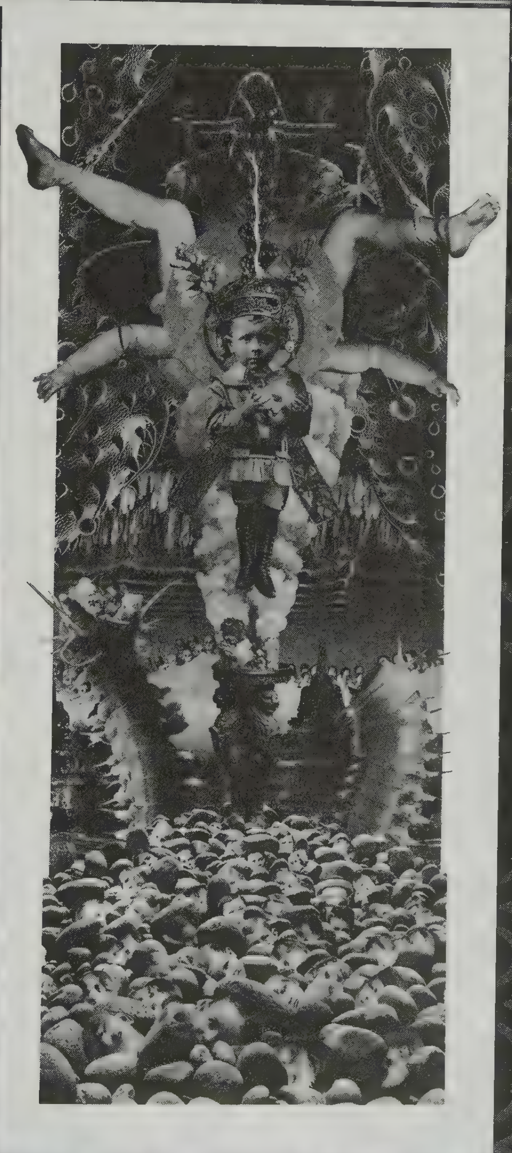
DAVID KERKES LAYOUT & DESIGN

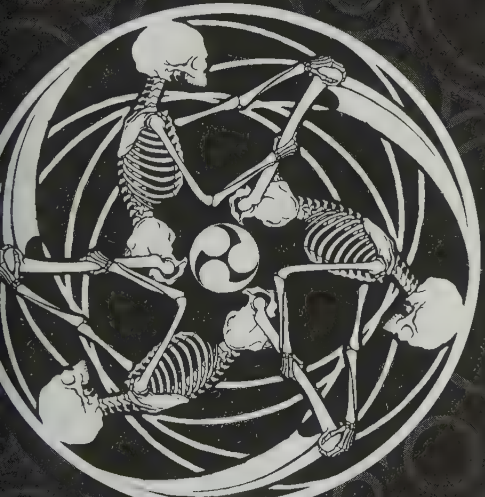
BORN AND RAISED IN MANCHESTER, England, **DAVID KEREKES** is a cofounder of Headpress and coauthor of the books **See No Evil** and **Killing for Culture**. He is also the author of **Sex Murder Art** and more recently **Mezzogiorno**, a meditation on life, death and southern Italy.

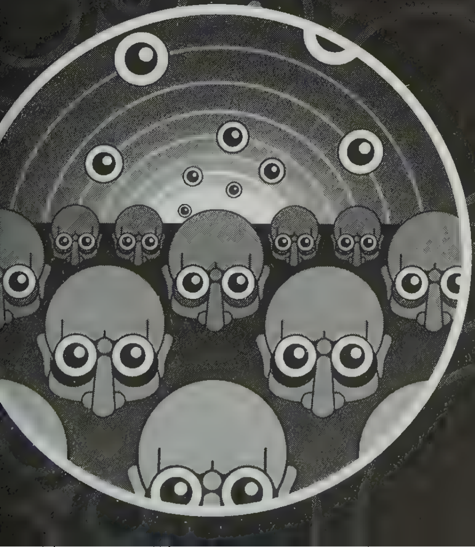
He edits and sometimes designs the Headpress books, and remembers vividly the first record albums he ever bought: **Let It Be** by the Beatles and **Monster Mash** by Bobby (Boris) Pickett and the Crypt-Kickers. Too young to fully appreciate one; too grown up to like much of the other.

HOWARD FORBES COVER ARTIST



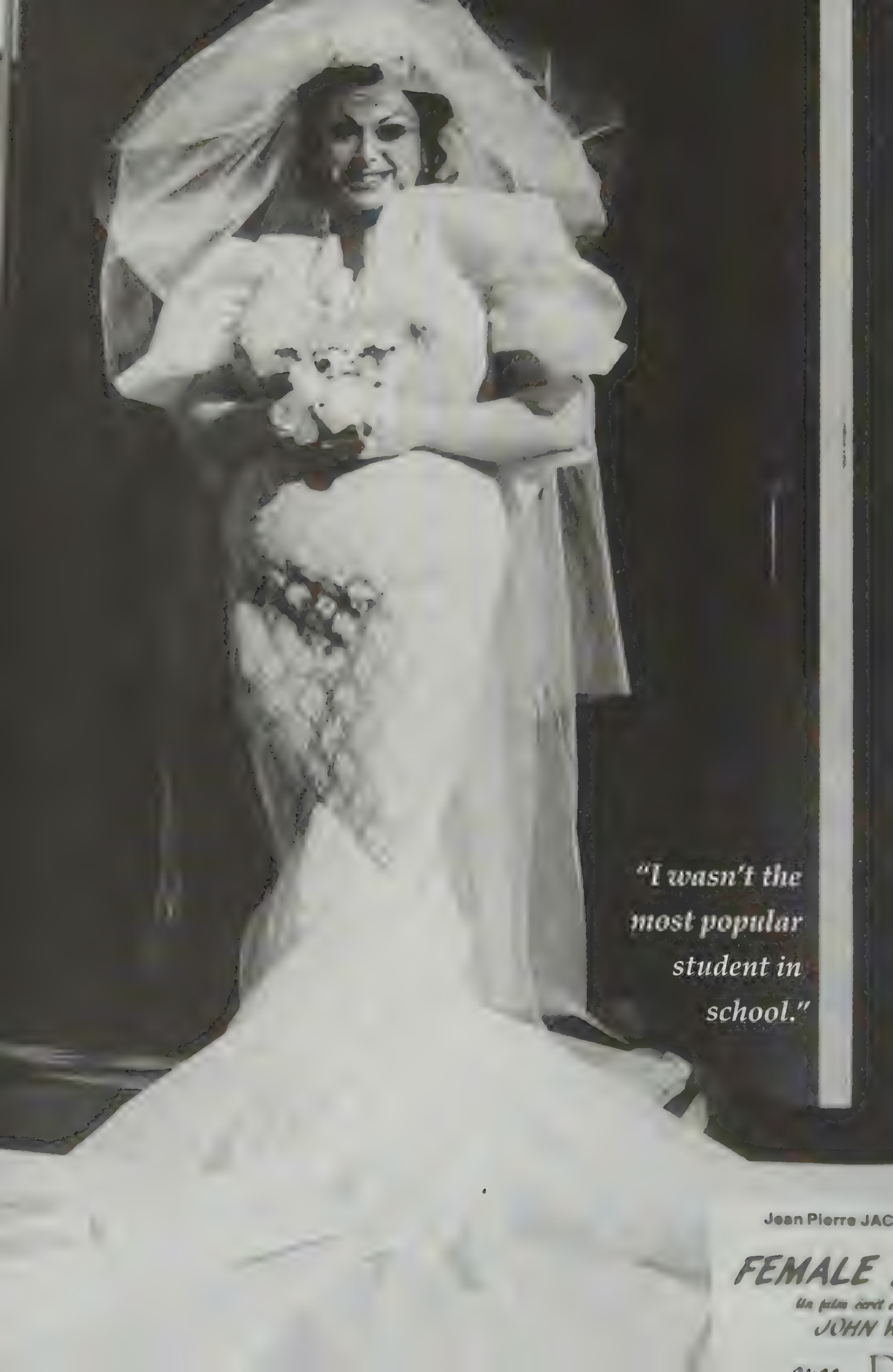






HOWARD FORBES is a graphic designer, illustrator, and pre-press technician in Portland, Oregon. He likes scalpels, Scotch, sashimi, Siamese cats, Laurel & Hardy films, Scott Walker records, and making things that are sometimes mistaken for 'art'. He grew up in the East Village of NYC during the period that most of this book's interviews were conducted, and many of the artists interviewed here continue to influence his work and outlook. He collects eyes, teeth, and claws, so if you have any to spare please send them to PO Box 2423, Portland, OR, 97208-2423 / www.misanthrope.com

COVER ART & ENDPAPERS: "THE FREAKS COME OUT AT NIGHT" 30x40" DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION / GICLEE PRINT. **ABOVE:** "THE BIRTH OF ELVIS IN BABYLON (OR BETHSAIDA)" 11x24" CUT-PAPER COLLAGE (NON-DIGITAL). **TOP LEFT:** (UNTITLED DRAWING FOR GEA*, DETAIL) 5x5" INK (NON-DIGITAL). **CENTER LEFT:** "TRISKELETON" 14x14" INK (NON-DIGITAL). **BOTTOM LEFT:** "I CAN NEVER TELL IF THEY ARE COMING OR GOING, BUT WHATEVER THEY ARE DOING I DON'T LIKE IT" (DETAIL) 44x22" DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION / GICLEE PRINT.


Jean Pierre JAC
FEMALE
Un film écrit
JOHN

"I wasn't the most popular student in school."

DIVINE

EASILY THE MOST FAMOUS LARGE actor in women's clothing, Harris Glenn Milstead's presence on this planet as an archetypal icon is validation of the worthiness of the existence of the human species. Making the world safe for freakazoids the world over, and introducing Earth to some of its more bizarre fashion statements, Divine, as he became known through his grand character, dominates well beyond his years on this planet.

Touring through Seattle promoting his first all-male role as Tilly Blue in Alan Rudolph's Trouble in Mind, I was warned not to ask him about 'eating shit,' something of which I had no plans whatsoever. At age seventeen I had other matters of discussion and when that door opened, and the large smiling round face of the beautiful Divine greeted me, breaching the divide between star and fan was my only goal. And within seconds of walking into the room, Divine's kind soul accomplished that connection with ease.

Top: Mick Jagger meets Divine at the Copacabana. Photo Bettmann/Corbis.

SHADE RUPE: Those are great shoes.
DIVINE: Thank you. I always say I look normal from my neck to my ankles. And the head and the shoes are always, as I say, fucked up.

Do you get bugged a lot now about looking normal?
Well, I always did, you know? In my own life I've always been quite conservative, actually. Except for my hair and eyebrows.

And your eyebrows are gone, aren't they?
They don't grow in anymore, just a little bit.

I used to be like a punk rocker and all that, and so I went kind of normal and everyone went, like people I haven't seen in years—
Gee, you went conservative! What happened?

I took drugs.
My godson, who is eighteen now, is a punker, and he has a different hairstyle every two weeks, dyes it. His mother calls me up and says, "I don't know what to do. He just walked in, he's got white hair."

She entrusts him to you? That's pretty cool.
I used to be one of the few people he'd listen to, actually. Because I told him, "Listen, Brooke, you've just got to get it together. You've got to get good grades this year, or you're really going to fuck it all up." And he said, "Oh, my mother's riding my ass." I said, "Well, of course she is, because you're being hideous." I said, "I don't want to be like her," I said, "but, believe me, if you picked up your grades, she wouldn't say anything."

It's his last year in high school, and he's always been an A student. He's always been an A student, and all of a sudden he was failing everything, because he was smoking

This page: John Waters and Divine take the town and [above] on the set of *Hairspray*.
Next page: Paul Bartel amuses Divine on the set of *Lust in the Dust*. Inset: German poster for *Polyester*

THE SIMPLY
Divine
CUT-OUT
DOLL
BOOK
Starring Divine
JOHN WATERS
Polyester
Divine Tab Hunter

Divine in Seattle promoting *Trouble in Mind*. Photo Shaun Rupe.

and drinking and I said, "Okay, do that. But do that on the weekend if you want to." You don't need to drink at all, actually; it's the worst thing you could do. But, of course, kids want to try everything, and there's all that peer pressure, too, from everybody else.

Did you get a lot of that when you were in high school?
Oh, well, no, not really, because I wasn't the most popular student in school. I was always fat and I wasn't very athletic.

Were you into drag then?
No. I was into horses, I rode a lot, and animals, and I swam a lot. But unfortunately we didn't have riding or swimming in my school. We had wrestling and basketball, which I wasn't any good at.

Okay, so of course the most obvious question is, What is it like to play a man?
Oh, it's like it should be, I guess, being a man. It's just—of course, it made me very nervous. I was very afraid of one of those Divine characters popping out any minute and making Hilly Blue something he wasn't supposed to be, very effeminate or something. So I kept a very close eye on that.

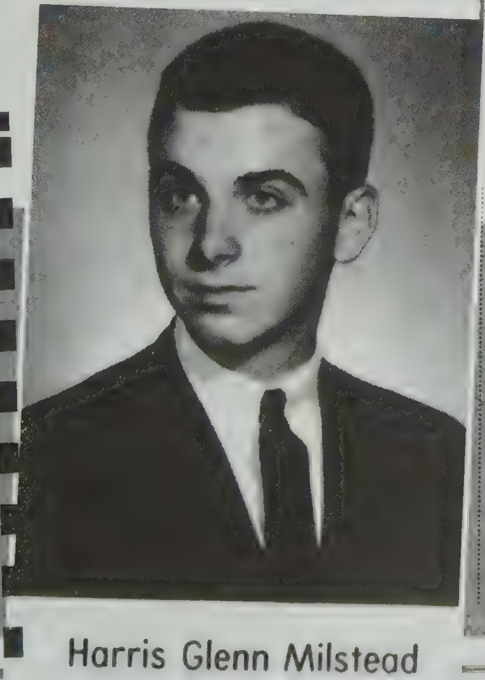
And of course I had a wonderful director, and wonderful people to work with, like Kris Kristofferson and Keith Carradine. So it ended up not being any problem at all. But I was very nervous, and I did lack the self confidence that I usually do have, because it was something completely different.

And, of course, working on that type of movie, on a big-budget film, what's called a Hollywood film, with top-name stars, is a bit different from working in the middle of a field in Baltimore with a bunch of kids that I grew up with. So it made me a bit nervous at first, but I grew to like it very much. And once I got into it, I really had a good time.

So what's next for Divine? More men, or—?
Well, I hope so. Unfortunately, in this business, unless you're a Barbra Streisand or a Jack Nicholson, you can't go around picking your parts. You have to wait until someone thinks: Aha, Divine would be good for this! Which is what happened with Alan Rudolph, and thank god it did, or I'd never have gotten the chance.

But I'm hoping when other people see it, they'll realize that I can play other parts besides the John Waters type roles and I'll get some other work.

Yeah, well, that's pretty cool. But, you know, you're always going to be a cult box office draw. So at least you get those people, no matter what you're in, even if it's a totally straight dramatic role.



Oh, yeah. I hope so. Sure. I love John's work. I think he's a great writer. I mean, I'm not embarrassed that I made his movies. That's why I'm sitting here, actually. That's how I got the Alan Rudolph movie, through my films with John. So I would always work with him again.

So what did you think of Seattle?
That's a difficult question to answer, because even though I was here on and off for four or five weeks altogether, about three-and-a-half, you don't really get to be a real tourist.

Every once in a while I had a couple of days where I just walked around the city and looked around. We had one night where we filmed in the Space Needle, so we had that to ourselves. We had one night where we had the monorail to film in, so I rode that about forty-five times from one end to the other.

And that was fun, because you didn't have to put up with all the people that would normally be on there, you know? We had our own monorail. I thought: Well, this is luxurious. I mean, things like that were fun. But it's just like anywhere I go. I was here for three-and-a-half weeks. Mostly during the day I was asleep or working, so I didn't really have a chance to have a good look.

Of course, I had a wonderful tour of the museum late at night, which was my house in the movie. The guards there and the curator took me through and showed me all the collections. I had a private showing, that was great. So being a celebrity of sorts has its advantages. You get to see things like that.

Once in London they took me through the Victoria & Albert at 6:30 in the morning. I saw a show in the Faberge collection; I had a private showing. So I thought: This isn't so bad, you know? I felt like Queen Elizabeth or somebody. So at times it's great.

Had you had any professional acting training or anything like that? You learned everything from working with John Waters?
Well, not everything. I taught him a lot, too, actually. It works both ways. I think acting, just like with writing or with being a photographer or being a good cook, or anything, I think it's just something, a talent you've got that's in you, you know? And you can either do something with it or not do so

Divine in high school.

much with it. Maybe just dabble with it, or forget it altogether. That's your choice.

But I don't think anyone can actually learn to act. You can learn how to enhance it or how to bring more of it out. But I'm not one of those actors who believes in people going to acting school. I think actually it does you more harm than good. It inhibits. I know a lot of people, it actually inhibited them, and they ended up not being as good as they were before.

I think mostly it's having a lot of self-confidence and a big enough ego that you actually believe you're so great that you can do it, you know?

Have you ever thought about any writing? You must have stories. Stories you can make into films or something.

Oh, I don't know who would want to watch them, or who could watch them. Yeah, I have plenty of stories. Plenty. And one day I would like to write a book. But I don't know who they could get to play my part, though, if they made the movie. I guess Rob Lowe. We look a lot alike.

I have a Divine paper doll cut-out book at home. That's the only book I've seen with any relation to you.

It wasn't a huge seller, but it's worth money now, actually, already. Two dollars more than it cost. But it actually did very well over in Europe. It sold very well over there. And I know they're holding about 50,000 of them here, waiting for me to get very successful in the States so they can release them again and everyone can have one.

But I did tour around to a few bookstores in Los Angeles and in New York, and I had to stand behind the counter and sign those for people. I didn't mind. I think it's very well done. My friend Van Smith, who designed the makeup in the very beginning, and still does it for shoots and things, and designs all my costumes to this day, he did the book. He did all the drawings. All of the costumes I've worn have been his designs, and many of the ones in there are the same ones I've worn in films or on the stage.

So you're the real Divine right now. This is you.

This is me, Divine the person.

How much of yourself is in each role? You're different characters in each film. Even though you're this crazy person in Polyester, and this crazy person in Pink Flamingos, you are different in each one.

You're one of the few people who've ever noticed that. They'll say, "You played Divine in six movies." I'll say, "I did not!" I was Babs Johnson in one and Dawn Davenport in another. They're all different people. They're similar because they all look alike. They're all fat and wear tight dresses. Because I am, so I can't help that.

Well, Rob Lowe looks the same in all his roles. Sometimes he wears shorter hair.

Does he wear tight dresses, too?

I don't know, but so I hear about Rob Lowe.

Maybe Richard Gere could do it, but—maybe Madonna.

You really do create each role differently.

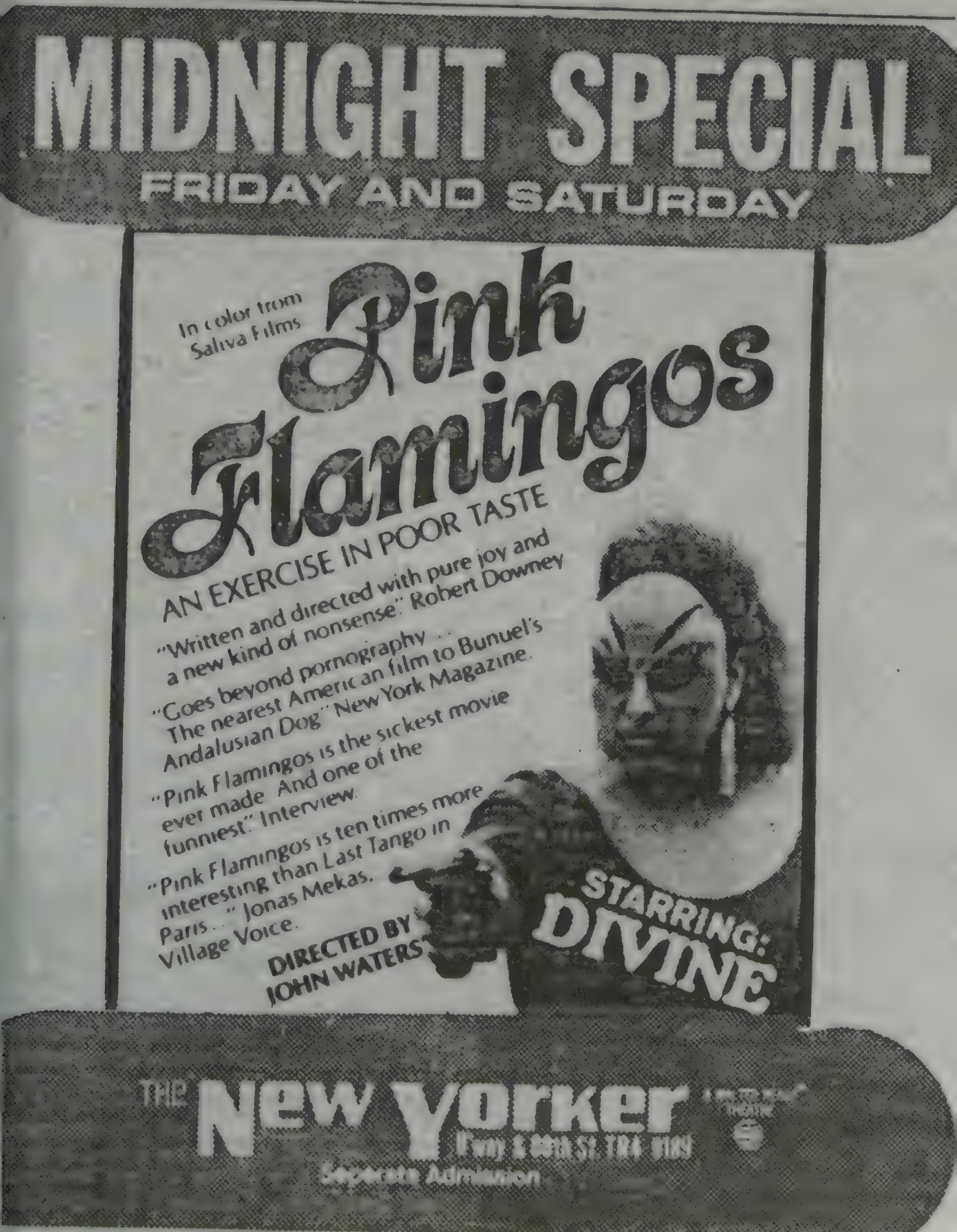
Oh, sure. Sure, they're all different people. And each one has to have its own personality. As I say, the only thing they do have in common is that they're all large. But, as I said, that's the actor who's playing them, so there's no getting around that.

In Lust in the Dust, I wore two corsets, and I still didn't have a waist. I couldn't believe it. Lainie Kazan was all cinched in, and she had this little hourglass figure. And they kept pulling my strings and nothing would happen, except they'd break the strings. They had to put all these knots in them then.

But they're all different. I try to give each one its own personality. I think the first time it really showed up was in Polyester. And, of course, I begged for that part. I asked John to please write me that, because I was typecast.

You weren't as menacing a character. You were a victim.

Yes, she was the underdog. Completely the victim through the whole movie. That was the first time I ever got good reviews. It was the first time they didn't say how tight my dresses were, because they were all hideous



MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

In color from Saliva Films

Pink Flamingos

AN EXERCISE IN POOR TASTE

"Written and directed with pure joy and a new kind of nonsense." Robert Downey

"Goes beyond pornography . . . The nearest American film to Bunuel's Andalusian Dog." New York Magazine.

"Pink Flamingos is the sickest movie ever made. And one of the funniest." Interview.

"Pink Flamingos is ten times more interesting than Last Tango in Paris . . ." Jonas Mekas, Village Voice.

DIRECTED BY JOHN WATERS

STARRING: DIVINE

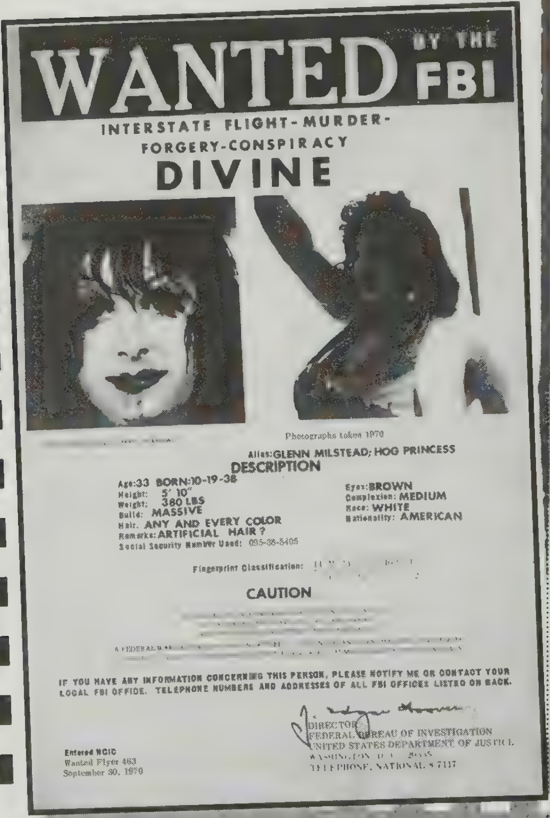
THE New Yorker

B'way & 88th St. TR4-9189

Separate Admission

polyester pantsuits and things that I thought, "Oh, I've got to put this on? This is the ugliest thing I've ever seen." John says, "Yes, yes, I know."

And they were hideous colors that I wouldn't normally wear, either. Because in my closet, it looks pretty in there. It's all glittery and all these pinks and purples, and the orange is in bright shades. And all of a sudden there was this big rose-print, two-piece pantsuit with a blue shell top. And I thought, "Oh, this is really ugly."



WANTED BY THE FBI

INTERSTATE FLIGHT-MURDER-FORGERY-CONSPIRACY

DIVINE

Photographs taken 1970

Alias:GLENN MILSTEAD; HOG PRINCESS

DESCRIPTION

Age:33 BORN:10-19-38
Height: 5' 10"
Weight: 380 LBS
Build: MASSIVE
Hair. ANY AND EVERY COLOR
Remarks:ARTIFICIAL HAIR ?
Social Security Number Used: 095-38-5405

Eyes:BROWN
Complexion: MEDIUM
Race: WHITE
Nationality: AMERICAN

Fingerprint Classification:

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Entered NCIC
Wanted Flyer 463
September 30, 1970

But it was fun. It was fun to wear that. I didn't have to worry. I didn't have two hours of makeup. I took fifteen minutes. And I didn't have to worry about messing up the outfit.

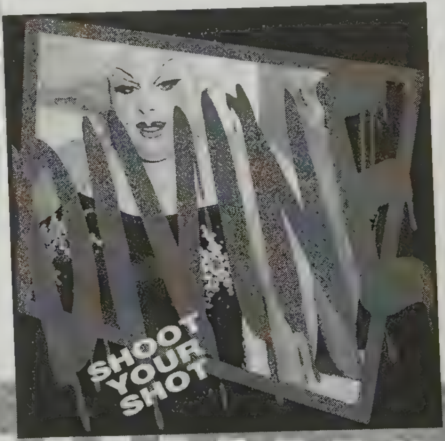
Have you been pleased with what you've seen of Trouble in Mind?
Oh, yeah.

So your character came across as well as you wanted it to?
Well, no. I mean, you're never that happy with your character, at least I'm not. I can't speak for other actors. At the end I did ask Alan if I couldn't start over again and do the whole thing and my part again. I was really into it by then and it could have been so much better, you know? But unfortunately you don't always get that chance.

I was quite happy with it, actually, after I saw it about the fourth time, and I finally calmed down and realized there was nothing I could do about this. But, no, I liked it.

Do you like being called Divine?
That's my name.

Where did the name Divine come from?
When I was born, there was little baby Divine in the manger. No, that wasn't it. It came from John Waters. He just said he always thought that I was, so that should be my name.



That was it. It didn't mean anything. It was just a name like Bob or Joe. It just happened to be Divine. And at the time there were the Warhol stars who had one name, you know. Diva. And now with like Madonna, and Prince, it's becoming popular again. So I just bided my time, and waited.

And, like Madonna and Prince, you also sing.
Oh, yes, well, better than either one, and people don't realize that. I mean, this is a

Left: A surviving wanted poster from *Pink Flamingos.*

knock-off act, Madonna. She just happened to be in the right place at the right time. She's making a few more dollars than I am, but I'll catch up one day.

You'll marry someone like Sean Penn.
I don't know if I'd marry him. I don't know who would marry Sean Penn and me, actually. I think somebody could marry Madonna and me, but I don't think I could actually marry. Can two men actually get married? I've read about it in the Enquirer.

What was it, Dog Day Afternoon? They couldn't legally do it.
You go through the motions. You could have a wedding with big veils and things. But I don't know who's going to wear the dress. He could wear it. Believe me, I'm tired of wearing them. Sean can have it. Is he into dresses, too? And Rob Lowe, too? You see the things you find out when you're doing an interview? It's amazing.

How are you doing with your singing career?
Well, I've been singing for over four-and-a-half years.

Are you putting out more records? Was the first album very successful?
Yes.

I've seen two of the videos.
I have two platinum and two gold records now. Four videos.

Four?
You Think You're A Man in England alone sold 180,000 copies. So, yeah, they've all done well. About six of them have made the Top Forty pop charts in London and the rest of the world.

I'm So Beautiful got some airplay here. "I'm so beautiful. You have to believe that I'm beautiful."
It's a modest little song, isn't it?

With that very tight dress and the mirrors. It's cute.

Jean Pierre JACKSON
FEMALE TROUBL

My father didn't like that video so much. But he sat and watched it. I couldn't believe it. I was playing it. I was so embarrassed, actually. Each of these dresses, he said, "Well, that's a pretty dress." Thanks, Dad.

How much input did you have in the music?
None.

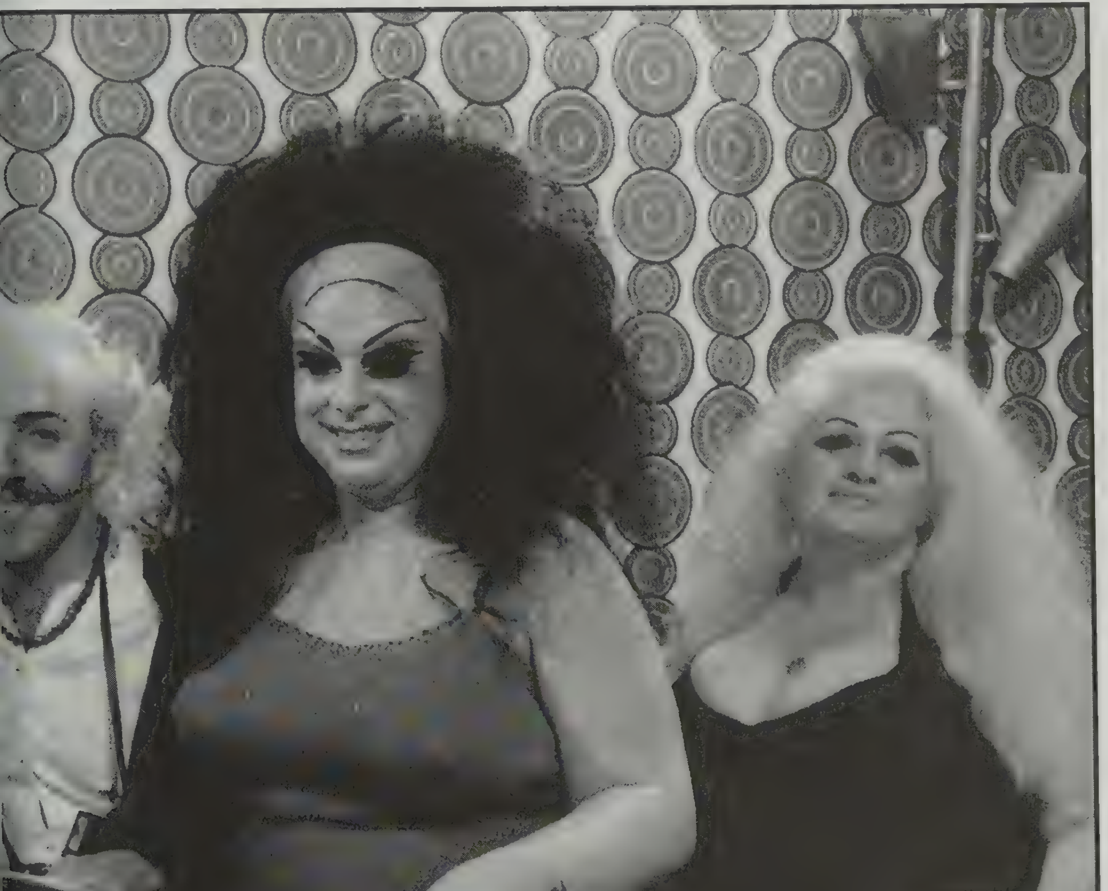
It was all production?
Uh-huh. Well, no, that's a lie, too. At first, none. But then with the new music, with the new company that I've been with for two years—I don't know how much longer I'll be with them, but I've been with them for two years. My contract's up in April, so I'll have to decide then what to do.

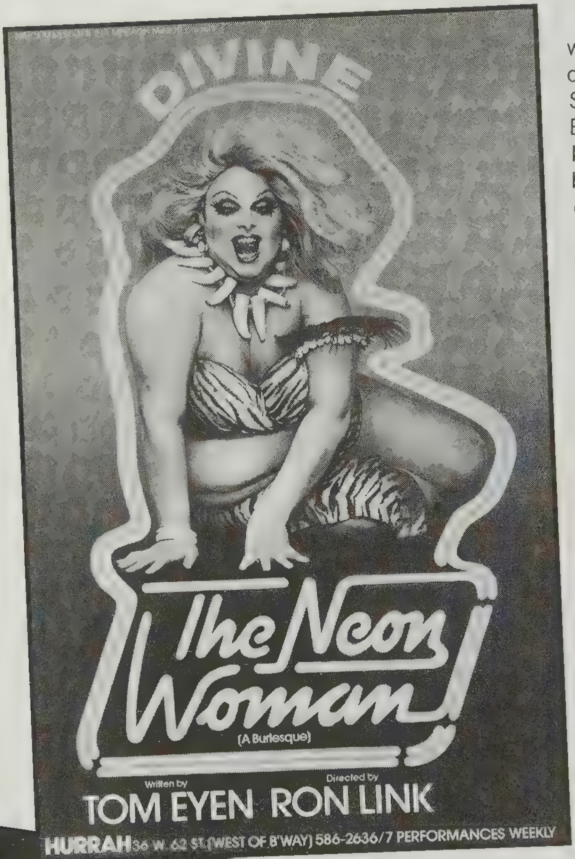
But I've had a lot of input with You Think You're A Man and I'm So Beautiful and Walk Like A Man, and Twisting The Night Away and Hard Magic are the two songs that I've done with Proto Records in London.

Because with the other company that I was with, which was out of New York, called O Records, Bobby Orlando was the producer. Bobby picked all the material. He picked all the covers for the albums, and I really contractually had no say in any of this.

I did all right by him, actually, because all the records that we did do were very big hits all over Europe. None of them charted or anything on the major charts, like the ones with Proto. But they did get my feet in the door, and did make me a popular recording artist everywhere else but America.

Jean Pierre JACKSON
FEMALE TROUBLE
JOHN WATERS
avec Divine


Jean Pierre JACKSON présente
FEMALE TROUBLE
Un film écrit et réalisé par
JOHN WATERS
avec Divine


DIVINE
The Neon Woman
(A Burlesque)
Written by
TOM EYEN
Directed by
RON LINK
HURRAH 36 W. 62 ST. (WEST OF B'WAY) 586-2636/7 PERFORMANCES WEEKLY

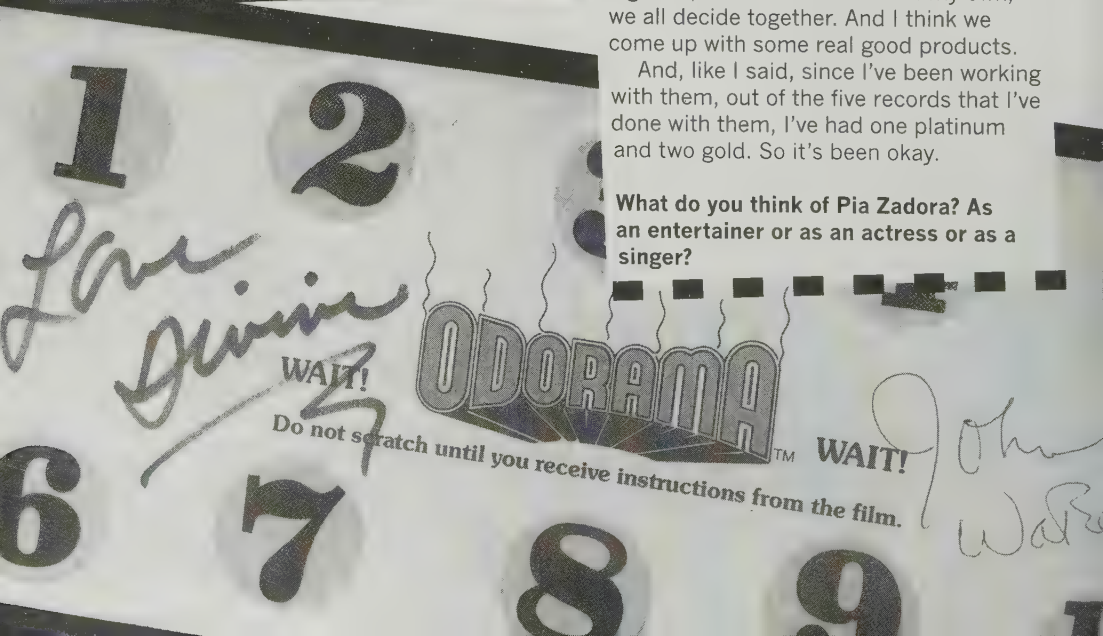
So that was okay. But when my contract with them was up, I really wanted to move on, because I did not want to be like Barbra Streisand. I didn't want to be the whole hog. But I wanted to have my input, because I know the image and the character of Divine better than someone who just picked up my contract.

Of course, they're doing it to make money. That's what it's all about. And I just wanted to make sure that my fans were happy, because they're the most important thing to an entertainer. They're the ones who buy these little coats and pay the little dinner bills and your rent and buy your cars. So you owe it to them. You owe them everything. And I was quite disappointed in some of the material, and some of the records I never even cut, because they were so bad. And some of the records he released were ones that I had done and had turned down, and he had put them out anyway. And that really made me angry. And I thought some of the album covers were not even second-rate; I thought they were just bad.

So the new ones, I've had full artistic control. They gave me control of album covers and of the material that I do, and so I found it better. I work with them. We have meetings and we all sit down together, and I don't decide on my own; we all decide together. And I think we come up with some real good products.

And, like I said, since I've been working with them, out of the five records that I've done with them, I've had one platinum and two gold. So it's been okay.

What do you think of Pia Zadora? As an entertainer or as an actress or as a singer?


1
2
Love
Divine
WAIT!
ODORAMA™
WAIT!
Do not scratch until you receive instructions from the film.
John
Wat
6
7
8
9

Previous page: Scratch and sniff Odorama card for *Polyester*. This page: Divine at the London Hippodrome, January 26, 1987, and [right] Brighton Bolts, June 24, 1984. Photos Michael Morton.

Is she an actress? She's all right, actually. I've met her, and there's talk of me doing something with her, so I don't know. We'll see what happens. I met Pia in Germany. We were both doing a TV special there. And she came out of her trailer. We had the same press agent at the time, and he introduced us. She got rave reviews at Carnegie Hall. She's got quite a big voice.

Yeah, she's going to be here next Thursday.
She sounds like Judy Garland. [Publicist Nancy Locke:] What's the name of her new movie, Shade?

Voyage of the Rock Aliens. There's also The Lonely Lady, Butterfly and Santa Claus Conquers the Martians.
I think she's to be admired, you know? I mean, her husband has helped her career. But she's damn lucky to have someone like that to pump money into her career. I wish I had her husband's money to put into mine. I'd be a lot more famous than I am. It's nice to fly around in your own jet and helicopter and all that. It makes it a whole lot easier when you're touring.

Bob Mackie does her costumes. I hate the bitch, actually, but she's all right. I give her credit. She's got a lot of guts. I think in the very beginning, as I was, too, she wasn't right on top of it, she wasn't that good. Neither was I. Take Grace Jones, for instance. I think when she started singing—

I have her early records.
They were pretty bad. But the more she worked and the more you get into it, the better it gets.

Yeah, I have Pia's first album. It's kind of mellow but the new one has a lot more rocky beat.
She's kept at it. I think she wanted to do it for herself, too. And now she's actually pretty good.

The reason I brought it up is because at the Seattle International Film Festival last year, my closest claim to drag fame, I won the Pia Zadora Look-alike contest, and so—
You're bigger than she is.

It was basically just because people in the audience were clapping and cheering. It was pretty funny. I have a fourth-row ticket for her show. Pia and Divine together sounds pretty neat.
Well, don't quote me. It's not for sure. It's just something that I heard maybe could happen.

How did you get into the drag thing with John Waters?
Well, John was looking for a big woman, because his idea of a movie star is something out of the ordinary. Like the stars

of yesteryear. These were film gods and goddesses, and people didn't even think of them as human beings, I don't think. They were movie stars. Which set them aside from being like anyone else.

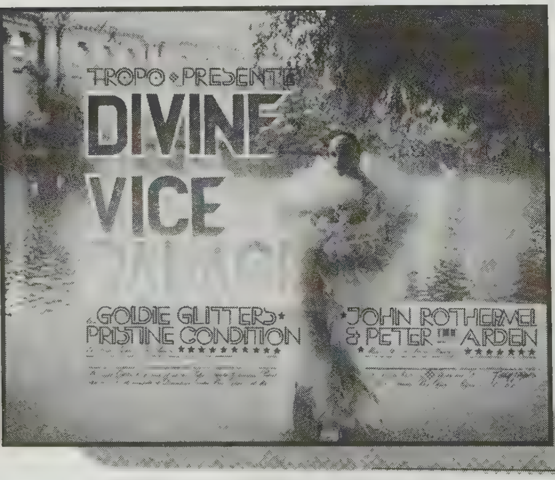
And John just wanted people out of the ordinary. That's why he was always choosing very fat people or people with some sort of affliction. It made them beautiful in his eyes, and therefore made them stars, as far as he was concerned.

We just started out that way. He was looking for a very large woman, he wanted her to be that but wanted her to be very sexy at the same time. And she happened to be a loudmouth bad bitch broad. And he couldn't actually find any woman who wanted to fill the role, wanted to fill these shoes.

So he came to me. He said, "I can't believe it. You're sitting right in front of my eyes, and in front of my nose. It never dawned on me." He said, "I've got a project." So he dressed me up, and I memorized the script, and here I am.

What about you don't people know, that you want them to know?
I don't think there's anything anymore. I think I've answered just about everything over the years, because I've been asked about everything, because of the image being so bold. People are bold in their questions, too. So I think I have been asked, and I have answered, just about everything.

Do you have any final comments?
[with a sly smile] Mm-mm.



[Shade readies for photo] This'll fit, yeah. Perfect. [click]
Publicist: You want me to take one of you together?

Yeah, do you know how to focus and stuff?
Publicist: No.

All you have to do is press the button. The shoes, hope you get the shoes. [click] Thank you so much. Thank you. This has been wonderful.
Thank you.

I think you're a very cool person.
Thank you.

Your fans will be happy you're not deranged.
Only in private.

Right: Rare promotional 'National Peep' given out at *Pink Flamingos* screenings.

NATIONAL

PEEP

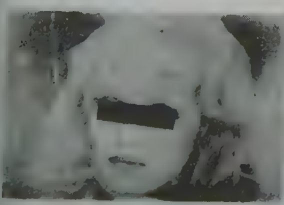
EXTRA

FROM SALIVA SALIVA FILMS

"All the Print
That's Fit to News"

IS THIS 'WOMAN' THE FILTHIEST PERSON ALIVE?

Tarred, Feathered and Shot in Wierdo Feud



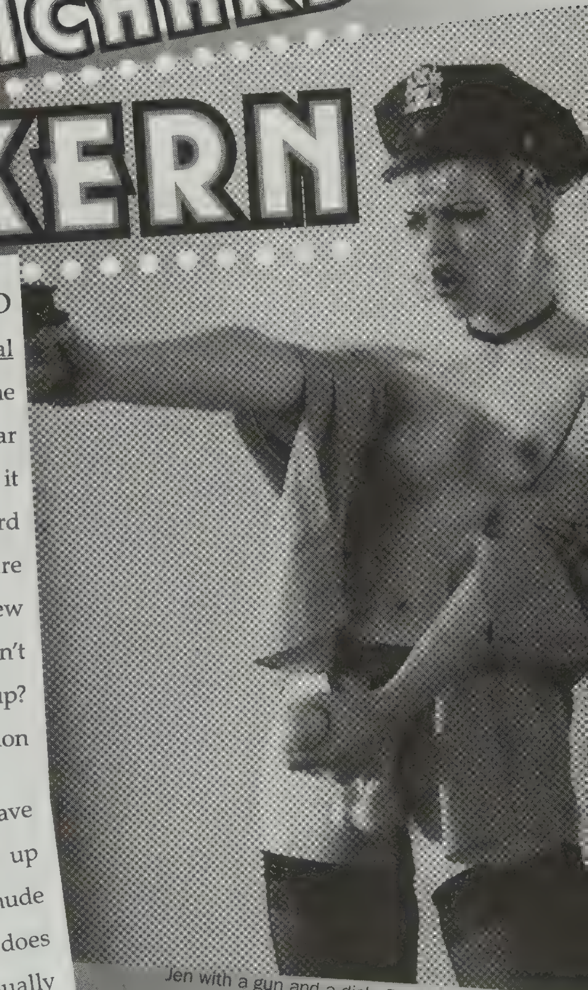
Sex Change Operation Paid For by Welfare

Richard Kern in 1985. Courtesy R [illegible]

RICHARD KERN

MY FRIEND GALEN YOUNG HAD created a tight publication called Essential Cinema and populated its pages with the great Jack Stevenson, the marvelous Kuchar Brothers, and the fabulous Marion Eaton: it only seemed sensemaking to ask Richard Kern if he'd like to join its pages. I'm unsure how I first contacted Richard. The New York Underground Film Festival hadn't yet started, so maybe I just looked him up? Regardless, Richard was a great introduction to New York artmaking of the time.

He's one no-bullshit dude. Just doesn't have time for it, and really has set himself up from underground punk rock guy to nude photographer extraordinaire. Nobody does it like Richard Kern and he continually finds the coolest hippest chicks to do the most incredible things. I was lucky enough to attend an, ahem, opening of Mr. Kern's in 2008 and Mr. Jim Foetus Thirlwell also dropped by for some wet-pantied wall pieces. Interview conducted at Richard's East Village studio.



Jen with a gun and a dick. Photo Richard Kern.

> *"That was a long time ago. I would show up for anything now."*

SHADE RUPE: So, Richard Kern, what has Film Threat done for you?
RICHARD KERN: Made me a lot of money. Brought me back to life... from the dead.

So did Chris Gore contact you first?
Yeah, well, actually Dave Williams did. The [Film Threat] Video Guide editor. He was the head of that for a while.

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So it was their idea to go ahead and put out a compilation.
Yeah, well they were always saying they wanted to go into distribution a long time ago, even before the Video Guide, and they had asked about it then but I just wasn't into it, because I had my own thing going. I had dropped out for two years, and when I came back they made this offer so I just did it on speculation. It was so good. Excellent. They paid me probably a third of what I make every year.

So were record stores your only source of distribution before the Video Guide?
No. I sold them through the mail. I still get mail order stuff. I've sold them through the mail since 84. I hardly ever sold to record stores. I sold mainly to people who would write for a catalog, and I would send a catalog. I've sold lots and lots and lots of tapes that way.

How did the King Missile video come about?
That was John Hall. He knew my stuff. I work for a video company now, but that's the only one that is actually happening. I've been working for them for about six months. And usually it's going to be people that have heard about, or knew, my stuff. I gave them my stuff already.

They just let me do it cold. It was good. They didn't put any demands on what was going to be in the video. But the music video business is the scummiest. Have you worked in it?

I just worked on this commercial for a gross kids' candy, Fruit by the Foot.
Yeah, so you work twenty-four hours.

The production office called me at 4:30 in the morning to be at the crew van in an hour. Not fun. Had you ever worked with anybody else's money before?
No, King Missile was the first one, so it was fun.

Was there any 35mm?
It was all 16mm, so it was a big change for me.

Did you have a full crew then? You got a camera operator, an assistant...

David Wojnarowicz in *Stray Dogs*.
All photos courtesy Richard Kern.

Yeah. I didn't have an assistant director, but I had a camera operator, a DP, PAs, lighting, the whole bit. It was fun.

Would you keep doing that, keep working that way?
Oh yeah, I mean, I made money on it. That's what I was trying to do, you know, as a moneymaking thing for this company. One of the owners of the company is Mike Levine, who shot all those Seattle bands along with that Charles Peterson guy, and Steve Brown who made a bunch of SubPop videos. They're the owners of the company.

Here in New York?
Yeah.

Charles as well as the others?
No, no. Mike Levine and Steve Brown. Mike Levine shot a bunch of that King Missile video and Steve Brown produced it.

It's just that most of the bands that I know that ask me to do a video for them, don't have the money to do it, and they know how to do something on their own.

Bands that I really like don't have $5,000 to do a video, you know? It's just a weird business. I'm into photos right now. It's like a raw video. A video is something that, if it happens, it happens, and if it doesn't, I don't care. Who cares?

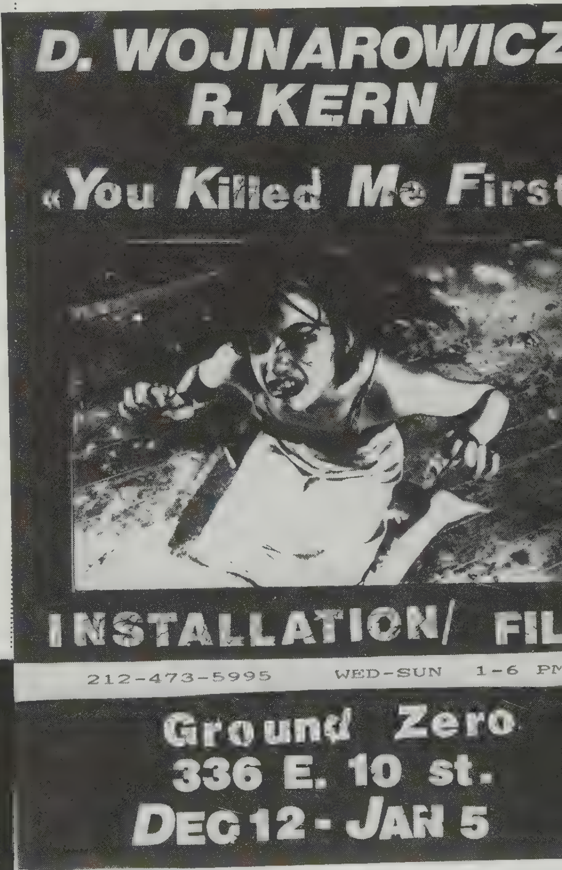
Are you able to support yourself with your films?
Through all the stuff. Films and photography. But I do construction about one week a month, and everything else. I just need a lot of money because I spend tons of money on photography. Sometimes that pays off. Like I have this spread in Hustler. That's weird. But it's not like the Hustler spread, it's like the art spread. Here, I'll show you.

[pulls out issue of Hustler]

This is more, as you can see, this is the stuff here. On this page and this page and here and—

Do you see yourself staying in Alphabet City?
I like it alright here. My three favorite models live two blocks from me. One lives a block that way and another lives a block that way. They won't have to go a long distance.

Look at this new girl I shot. She lives two blocks away. Why would I want to move?



D. WOJNAROWICZ
R. KERN
«You Killed Me First
INSTALLATION/ FIL
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Wow, seriously.
Yeah, she's beautiful.

Pierced nipples seem popular.
Yeah, they all got it. They all have it these days.

Have any investors ever approached you? Has anybody offered to pay you to do that kind of thing?
Film Threat has a standing offer where they'll front me money for a film.

For a feature film?

Super-8, yeah. But not a lot of money, but all the equipment and a piece of money. That may be a movie with Lydia Lunch, this movie we keep talking about doing. I was talking with her the other day. We've been talking about this on and off.

There's a standing offer with this Danish film board. All this 16mm stuff, all the equipment and all the supplies. There are people that are trying to put a book out for me. I don't know when that's ever going to happen.

That's what I'm really interested in. I want to do something with Lydia that's really out there, you know?

Ten years ago when you started making movies is that what you wanted to do, you wanted to get to a point where you could just shoot Super-8? Naked girls, guns...
Yeah, I wanted to get to a point where I could have people come over, girls mainly, and drop their clothes when they come to my house, and that's pretty much what happened. Not to brag, it's just what I do.

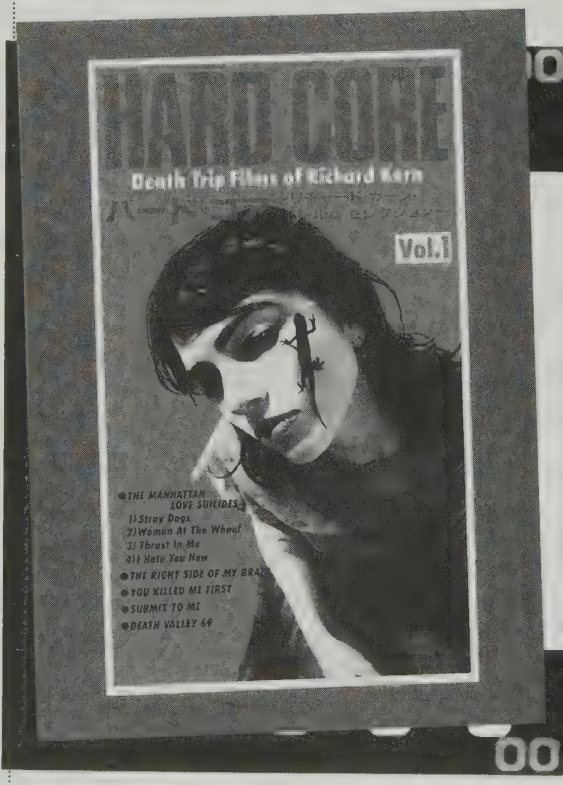
Where do you show something like [King Missile's] Detachable Penis?
I don't need to show it. The label can show it. That was a job. But it still has me in it, you know? It's still my thing, obviously. 'Cause all the jokes were like my kind of jokes.

I show it at like video festivals and shit, but I can't get any money out of that. It's the thing, you do something for a record company and you have no rights, because they're scum.

They're not scum really, but they know how to play it, because they know how much money they can make on stuff. They're not dumb.

So what happened to all your old stars? Where's Lung Leg now?
Lung Leg lives in San Francisco and people from time to time come in and they see her. Every time a New York band goes there—like Cop Shoot Cop just told me they saw her at a concert—she always does the shows. I heard she looks like a real witchy California-looking drug culture icon. Just long dirty hair and dresses like some Gothic rocker. I don't know. She never wore black leather. I haven't seen her in so long. She called me and said she was moving back here, but she never showed up. I don't know.

Marty Nation has a rock 'n' roll hairstyling place in Venice. He's actually been living there for years. He collects cars, and that sort of thing. He's pretty much just like he is in Fingered. And I saw that guy who he killed in Fingered. I was in a record store on St. Marks Place and this guy looks up and says, "Richard? Richard?" and it was the guy. I didn't even recognize him.



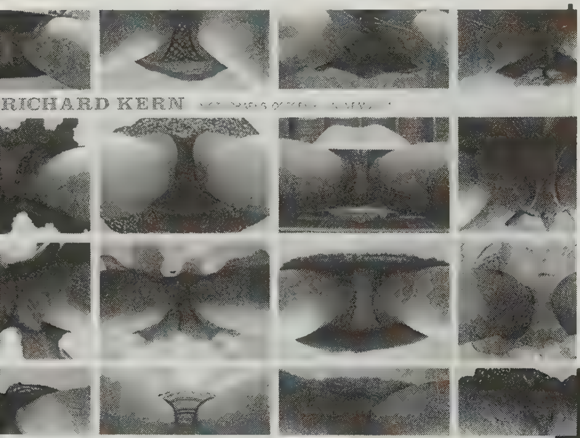
Jet?
Yeah. He manages some bands like Tormentor. Lung's the big mystery girl, though. Lots of people are still around.

Do you get letters from people out there, like fans? People who want to be in your movies?

Jackie O in *X is Y.*

Yeah, but I haven't been at my address in a while. Lately I've been just using the Film Threat address. But when I show films, people do come up to me.

The last show I did was in Madison and several people came. People always come up and say, "Me and my girlfriend are really weird, we want to be in your next show." I've got my own people here. I've got people I like to work with.



So what's your relationship with Nick Zedd?
We talked the other day for the first time in three years. That was pretty good; it was pretty cool. You know, it's like nothing ever happened.

What did happen?
I didn't show up for a show I was supposed to do, and he got really pissed off. The movie wasn't finished yet and I didn't want to show it. I had just quit smoking and hadn't smoked for four days. When you quit, you get like really insane.

I believe it was about the show. I was supposed to show this movie and I didn't want to show it, so I just didn't show up. That was a long time ago. I would show up for anything now.

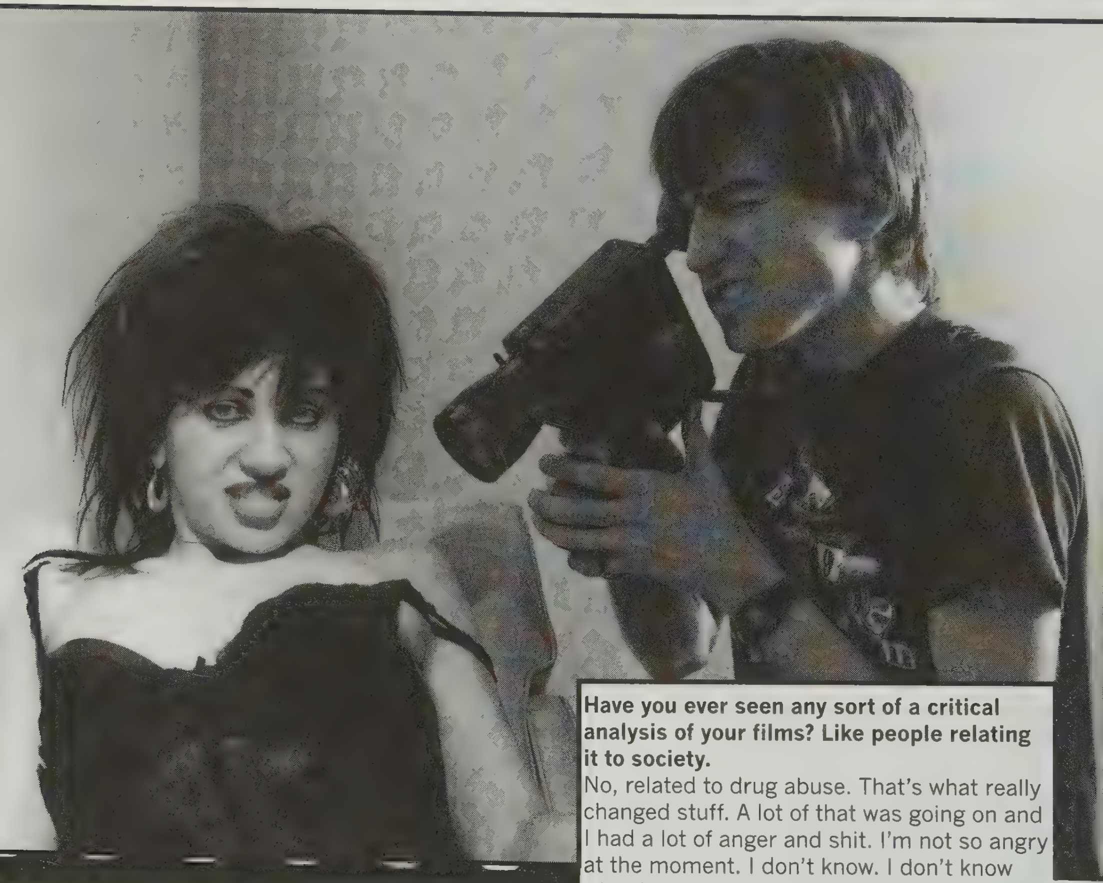
How long have you been in New York?
Since 1979, 1980, something like that. I moved here to get away from Philadelphia. I moved to Philadelphia to get away from North Carolina, where I'm from.

Fingered is the only actual narrative film of yours that I could see going on for ninety minutes, with that whole adventure. Are you thinking of a full narrative treatment for your feature film?
That would be wonderful. It would be nice to do that. I guess we could just stretch Fingered out and have a lot of chases and shit.

But at the end of Fingered you hear 'bang! bang! bang!' and they turn around like there's something there.
It may not be on some of the tapes but a sheriff yells "give up." We just wanted it to end. We wanted to do it fast.

One thing you've said recently is that you'd rather show girls taking off their clothes than blood splashing on the screen. Are you saying that you're not so interested in

Above: Richard Kern and family at the Looker show, 2008, NYC. Photo Shade Rupe.
Left: Invitation postcard for the Looker show.



violence? Because the music is still violent. In The Bitches there's 'violent sex' but they're laughing. It might be an outtake but after he's finished slurping all the stuff up off his face he looks up and smiles.
[Laughter]

Yeah! He looks like he's havin' fun! In Submit to Me, 'SEXDEATH' flashes across the screen. These people are staring into the screen showing you what they can do to themselves. Now you see a girl writhing around in a Nazi outfit rather than covered in barbed wire. Is there anything going on in your own life that's made you decide to do that?
I don't know, you tell me.

Have you ever seen any sort of a critical analysis of your films? Like people relating it to society.
No, related to drug abuse. That's what really changed stuff. A lot of that was going on and I had a lot of anger and shit. I'm not so angry at the moment. I don't know. I don't know what I make movies about. If I make the one with Lydia it will be violent.

I would like to make a violent movie, but it just seems so old you know. I see some things that are really good like that Jim VanBebber and his short films.

So you've seen Nekromantik? You talk about violence, you say it's old and boring and you see Nekromantik. Every bit of the violence is part of the film. He's not doing it so much to shock; it's what he's into.
I'm into all that, I'm just not into it at the moment. I'm into whatever I'm into. I heard VanBebber made a movie about Ricky Caslo, that Satan teen. I just read about it in Film Threat. I'd really like to see it. And his Manson Family movie looks like it's gonna be good. But that's just good moviemaking. That's not even underground movies, that's like real movies.

I pretty much get everything I want. Right now I don't have to go to great lengths to get some girl to hang out over here and cover her in blood. Though I did shoot something like that recently. It was really weird to go do something all bloody. But I don't need the same excuse. I'm older, too, so...

You were talking about drug abuse earlier.
Yes, I was a drug abuser. Now, I'm not.

Like pot, dope, coke...?
Sure. I did all these junkie movies too. I got one where everyone just shoots up and throws up over and over. I just showed it recently. I hadn't shown it since 1985. I did a benefit for the needle exchange here and showed all these movies of all these people just shooting up [laughter]. It was pretty funny.

So why'd you go off? Was it having success with your movies?
Why not talk to you in a few years on dope and see what happens to you? You lose everything. Anyway, all that violent stuff. I was in that phase. Now I'm in this pervert phase. I don't have to hide anymore.

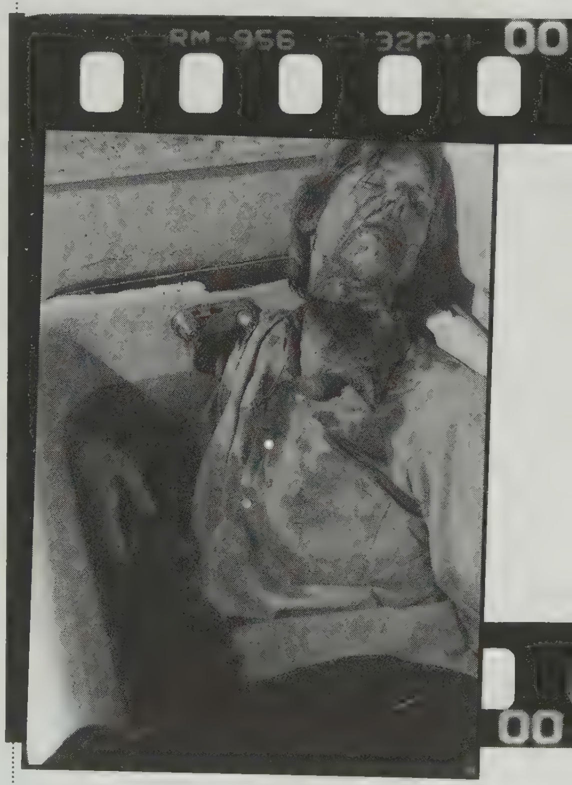
You're gonna make Bambi movies after all this, you're gonna get so bored.
It's not boring, it's just really distracting. Like living out your fantasies, because then your fantasies get a little hard on you.

Do you use Super-8 just because it's what you can afford?
No, when I started Super-8 was still a popular medium. You could still buy it and get it processed overnight, get prints made in two days. I still have the equipment and a lot of film. I shoot every photo session on Super-8, that's why you see those projectors.

I've got this girl that I chained up rolling on the floor that I shot in Super-8. It's really going back full circle to the Super-8 porno loops that I used to like.

What filmmakers do you admire?
I like all of them, what can I say? I have to say that Todd Phillips' Hated was really good. And Deadbeat at Dawn. And I liked that Romper Stomper pretty much except they made it a love story at the end. The skinheads should've won. I liked Man Bites Dog. That was good. I like the Dark Brothers.

If it wasn't for Film Threat where else would you be doing this?
That's right! People give Film Threat so much shit. It's like in Film Threat you can get so much shit. Nowhere else are they going to write about these kinds of films. They write about everything. Film Threat encourages people to make movies.



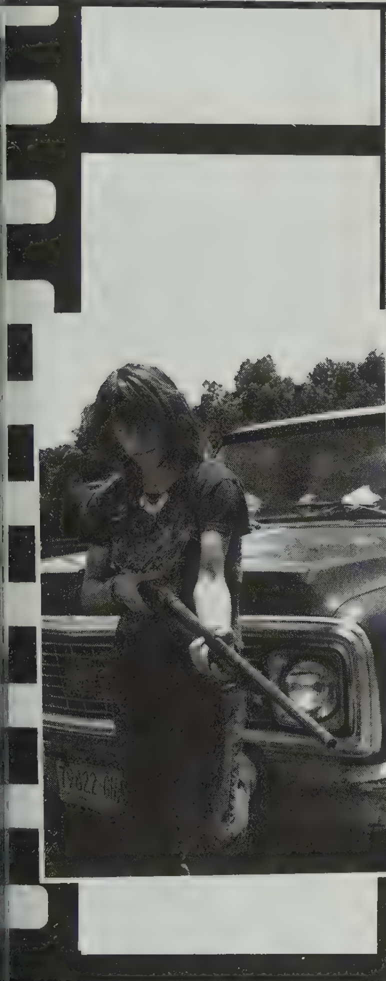
Previous page: Lydia Lunch and Richard Kern shooting *Fingered*.
This page: Thurston Moore in *Death Valley 69*.

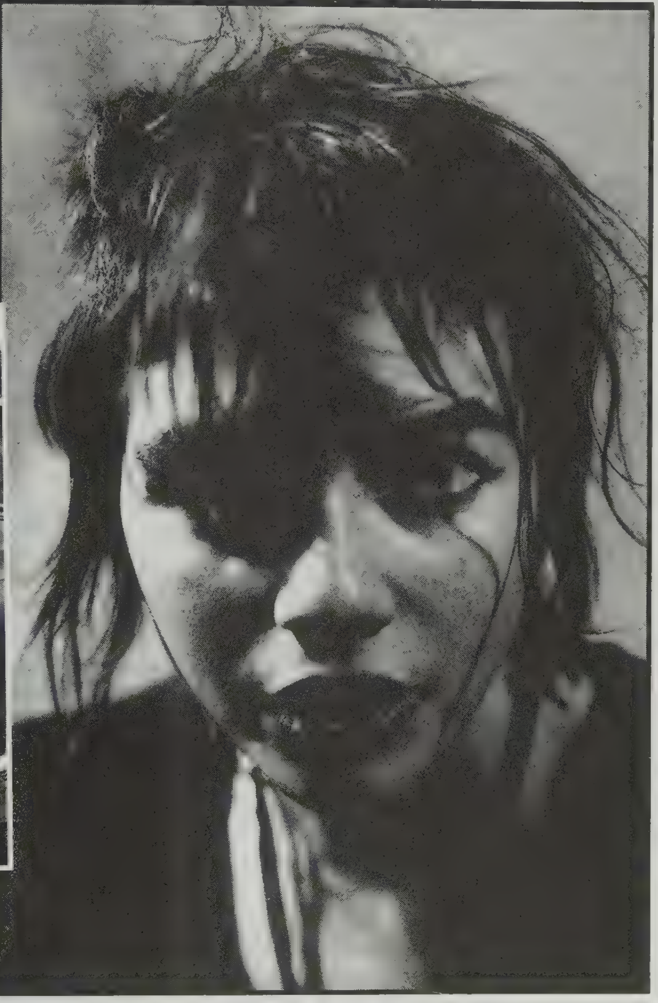
Look at all those reviews in there, look at all the people making films. They are the only ones that write about filmmakers who are out there doing stuff. They don't have to be some big fucking Hollywood dude or some fucking person who died a hundred years ago. Or somebody who made something in Italy a hundred years ago. They want people now, here in America, making films. And they

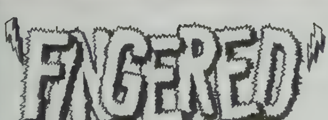
REPUBLICANS

can't get it shown anywhere else. It's stuff you don't read about anywhere else.

Where do you see yourself ten years from now?
In a house in the south of France. Like this guy who photographs for Hustler. I heard he has a house there, and a house in L.A., and a house in New York. I don't know. I see







myself wearing a radiation suit. I see myself as forty-eight years old and probably going, "Gosh, how can I get these young girls to do this stuff now?" If I actually make a feature, who knows what'll happen?

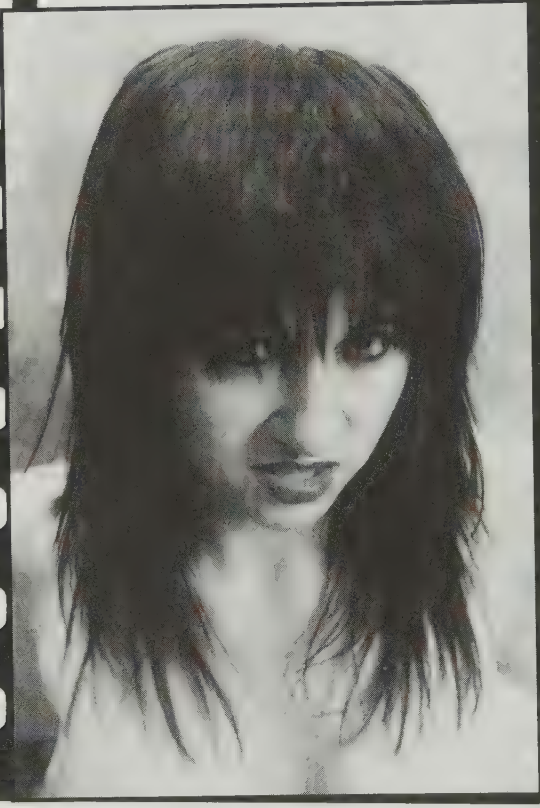
I hope I'm an artist. I hope that's what I am.

How did the Hustler spread and these other magazine appearances come about?

I'm shooting bands for them now, occasionally. Everybody is interconnected in the publishing business. The managing editor of Seconds used to put out this magazine called Exit, which is like this underground zine, and he called me for pictures.

All these people, they don't disappear. Like Peter Bagge. I've read his shit since I moved to New York. He was in all these different magazines. John Holstrom, he's like the editor of High Times now. They don't go away. They're around forever.

Previous page: Kembra Pfahler in *The Sewing Circle*. This page, clockwise from top: Kim Gordon in *Death Valley 69*, Lung Leg, and *Fingered* title. Photos Richard Kern.



If you're young and you're doing something with your fanzine editor and they seem like a person who's going somewhere, and most likely they are, they're not going to die unless they're a junkie or something. In ten years, they're gonna be working at Spin or something in like two years and this network just keeps growing.

That's the cool thing about the underground, in whatever underground you're in, is that it never really goes away and you just get into the fabric of society. If they were cool people in the first place or their ideas were pretty avant-garde or whatever, they carry it in into whatever area they're going into.

I got into Hustler because I knew the guy who's the editor. I knew him four years ago; he was a fan of Fingered. He comes back. I see another guy, Eugene Robinson, who's been writing articles for Hustler, I met him a long time ago through Lydia. Big muscle guy. He's a bouncer in all these clubs. He wrote articles about beating people up for money; he knew what he was talking about. I knew this a couple of years ago. He's still around. He may also be the star of our movie with Lydia.

If people don't get fucked up a lot they generally stay around forever.

Do you have a script idea for this feature film?
It has a lot to do with incest, race baiting, a lot of racial hatred, a lot of incest, and everybody fucking everybody. A black cop, played by Eugene, and Lydia is the baiter and her relentless abuse of this guy. I wrote out a treatment for it.

Will you have a rock band crossover? Put out a soundtrack?
I doubt it. I usually get the music afterwards. A lot of the people I've worked with have gotten really big. I've worked with Henry Rollins. Well, he was big when I worked with him. There are people like Cop Shoot Cop. I knew they were gonna be big.

It's pretty easy to see who's going to be big. If they play every night, if they tour, they're going to be big, if they're worth anything. You can smell who's going to suck. You can smell who's going to be good. It's pretty easy.

Since you'll be an artist in ten years, do you have any statements to make?
As an artist? That's why I might not be an artist.

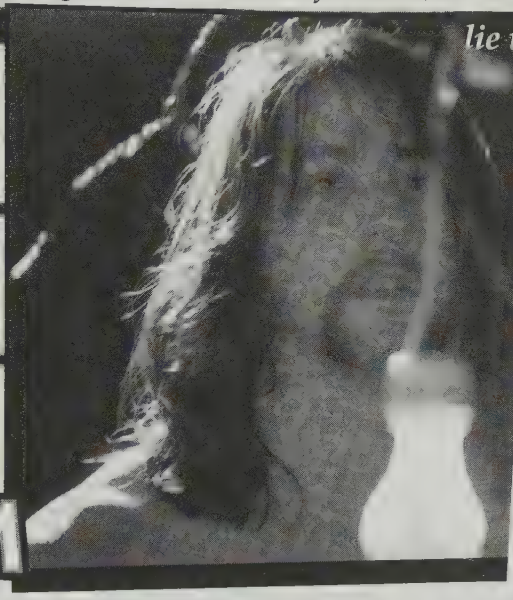
Yes, all women should be spanked! [Wild, raucous laughter]

Thank you, Richard Kern!
[tape off]
I'm probably gonna get in trouble for saying that.

Lydia Lunch 1990.

"I'm not going to talk to these fuckers, because they would lie to me anyway."

Wall decorations in *Road Kill.*



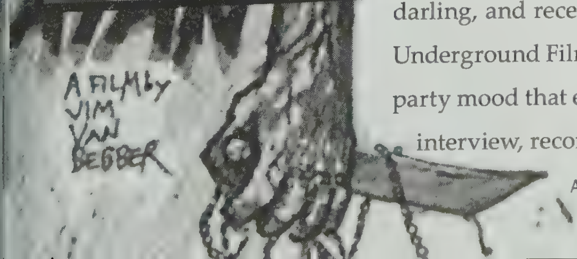
Jim blasting off.

JIM VANBEBBER

THROUGH my Vancouver film school pal Tessa Bartholomew I was introduced to producer Gary Blair Smith who I interviewed for a class project. I checked in with Gary later and was invited to work on the trailer for Chunk Blower, and ended up meeting Jim VanBebber on set in March 1990, carrying around the script that would become The Manson Family. Fifteen years later I participated in the theatrical release with Chicago Underground Film Festival cofounder Jay Bliznick.

Jim's debut, Deadbeat at Dawn, had caught Gary's eye, and Jim became a *cause célèbre* of the underground, a Film Threat darling, and received audience prizes at the first New York Underground Film Festival for My Sweet Satan. Jim was in a party mood that evening, which informs his answers in this interview, recorded in an East Village apartment in 1993.

Jim in Rick Kassin



All photos courtesy Jim VanBebber and Dark Sky Films.

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DEADBE

SHADE RUPE: You've received extensive coverage in GoreZone, Deep Red, and now Film Threat. Do you consider yourself a horror or splatter director?

JIM VANBEBBER: Probably, based on what I've made so far. I certainly love it. And, yeah, probably. Always probably the splatter crowd, if that's what they want out of a film, they'll get some satisfaction with the one I made.

How are you supporting yourself?

By the skin of my teeth.

Has Deadbeat at Dawn received an actual release?

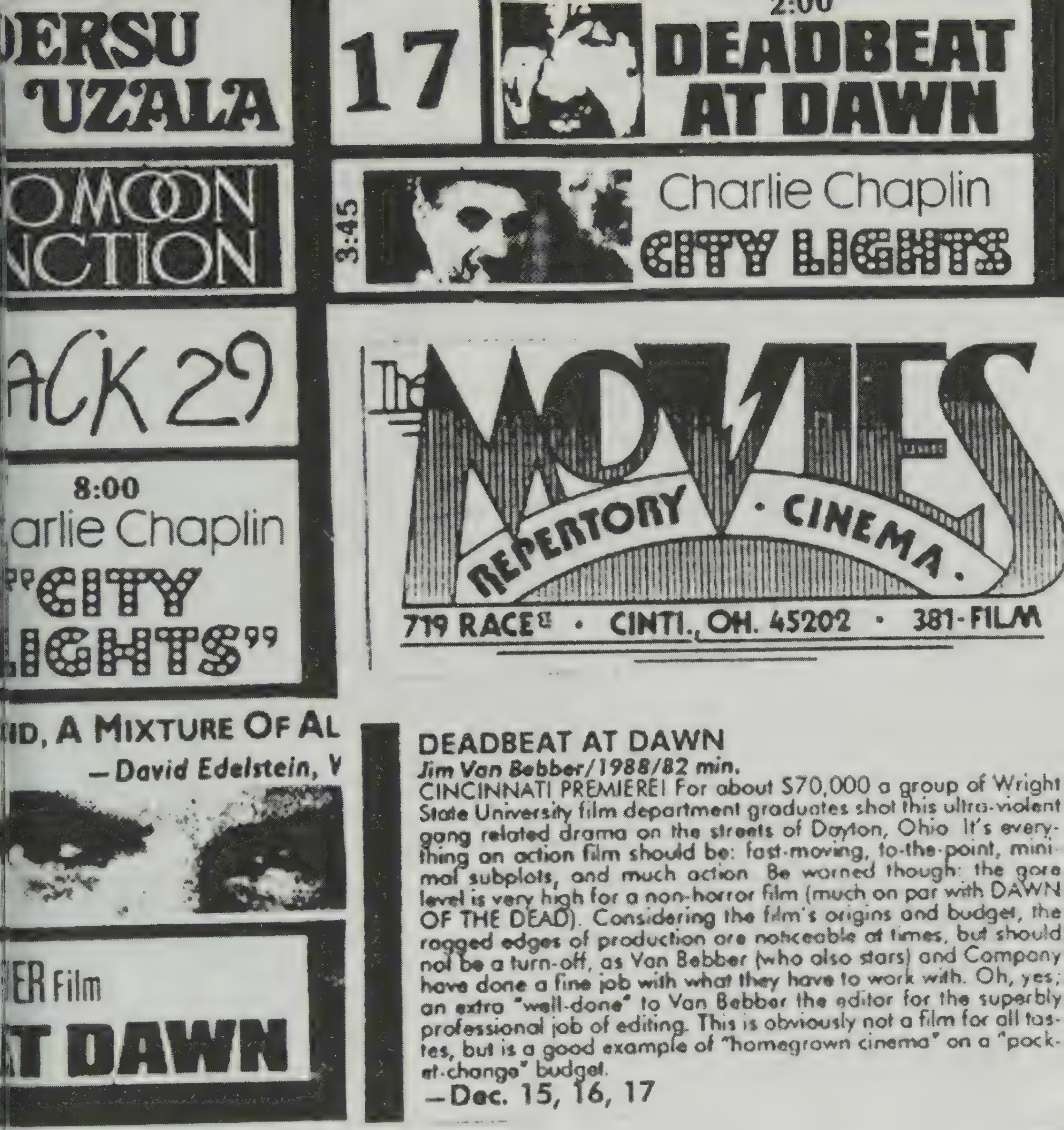
Sure, it has.

Has it played in any theaters?

Not a theatrical release. It had a national video release through Ketchum Video.

When was that?

In 1990. We have now gained back our rights domestically. Because Vic Mercer is a fucker,



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—David Edelstein, V

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DEADBEAT AT DAWN
Jim Van Bebber/1988/82 min.
CINCINNATI PREMIERE! For about $70,000 a group of Wright State University film department graduates shot this ultra-violent gang related drama on the streets of Dayton, Ohio. It's everything an action film should be: fast-moving, to-the-point, minimal subplots, and much action. Be warned though: the gore level is very high for a non-horror film (much on par with DAWN OF THE DEAD). Considering the film's origins and budget, the ragged edges of production are noticeable at times, but should not be a turn-off, as Van Bebber (who also stars) and Company have done a fine job with what they have to work with. Oh, yes; an extra "well-done" to Van Bebber the editor for the superbly professional job of editing. This is obviously not a film for all tastes, but is a good example of "homegrown cinema" on a "pocket-change" budget.
—Dec. 15, 16, 17

and he, well, yeah, he gave us our rights back. 'Nuff said.

Did you get any money out of that at all?
Yes, we got an advance.

How'd you find all the money, then, to go ahead? Like, how much did you start with? You had the ten rolls of film.
We started with $2,000. That was what my loan was.

What did the total costs come to after four years?
It was three-and-a-half years. By the time we got it to print, it was eighty-five grand. And we still haven't paid any of the investors back or any of the actors on deferment. But we look forward to making money, still, with this film, somehow.

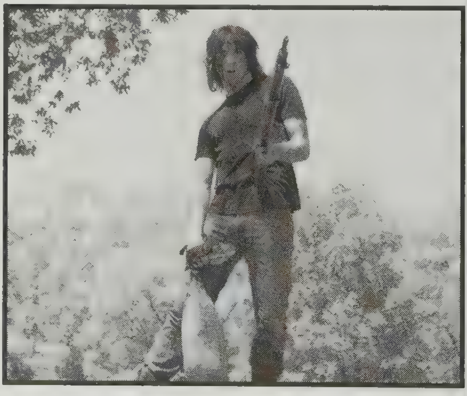
I think it could still be released.
There's a lot of markets that haven't even been touched.

A 1988 schedule from The Movies repertory cinema in Cincinnati, Ohio. Courtesy Jim VanBebber.

I want to see cool movies in theaters again.
I hate shit like that.

I finally watched Combat Shock two weeks ago. I just got sick of waiting for an uncut print. I miss everything, because I don't want to see it on tape.
There's not that much difference between the cut and uncut Combat Shock.

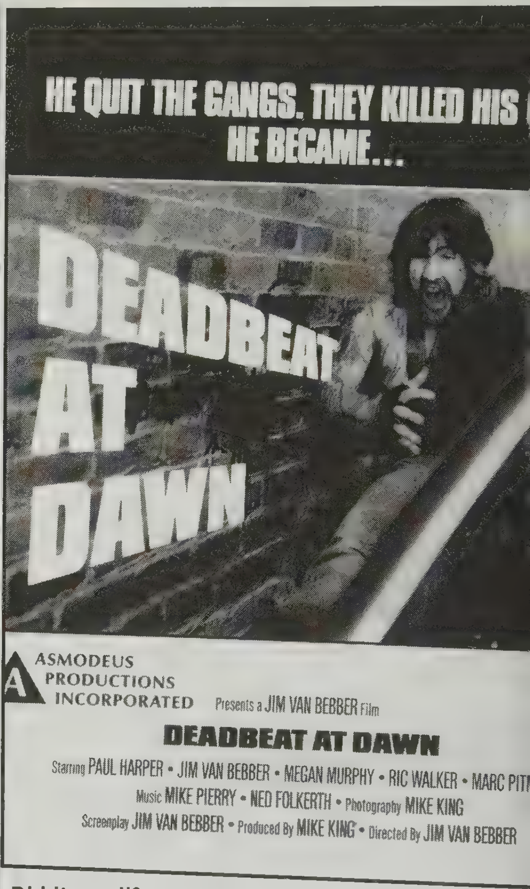
The point is that you should see it while it's out there.
Of course. It's like, such a minimal difference; it's like, why cut it? Troma are bastards. I think they're fuckers. They're dog rapers. Lloyd and George—is it Lloyd and George?



Jim VanBebber as Goose in *Deadbeat at Dawn.*

Yeah, Kaufman.
Yeah, and you guys are dog rapers.

Okay, you finished Deadbeat at Dawn. It hasn't paid itself off. You kept on to make movies. Is this when you started Charlie's Family?
No, I wrote the script to Roadkill. I was friends with John Martin, and a friend of mine, Cricket, suddenly got a settlement from a wound that a pitbull had put in her face years earlier. And she gave me $500 because we were working at the same goddamned Mexican restaurant. And she pitied me and knew what I was capable of and gave me $500 and said, "Make your trailer for that fucking thing you've been writing." And so we did it. And I lived in that place. That was my place.



HE QUIT THE GANGS. THEY KILLED HIS
HE BECAME...
DEADBEAT AT DAWN

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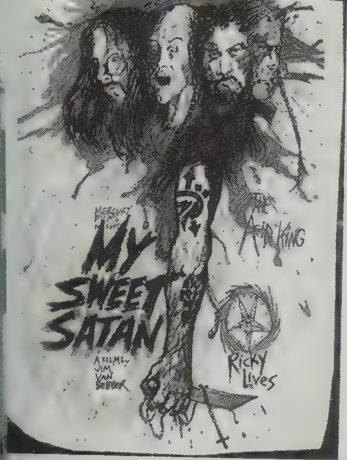
DEADBEAT AT DAWN

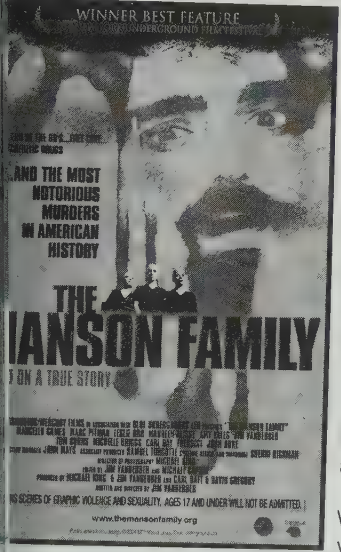
Starring PAUL HARPER • JIM VAN BEBBER • MEGAN MURPHY • RIC WALKER • MARC PIT
Music MIKE PIERRY • NED FOLKERTH • Photography MIKE KING
Screenplay JIM VAN BEBBER • Produced By MIKE KING • Directed By JIM VAN BEBBER

Did it smell?
Oh, yeah. We picked up real roadkill off the streets. We cruised around, we got a shovel, and we fucking scraped up those cats and dogs and possums or whatever, man. Sure.

That was only 500 bucks, for Roadkill?
Shit, man, less than that. We spent probably $250 on making it, and rent and making packages and these brochures that we sent out with the tape to everybody. Because we thought we'd launch this whole campaign to get this thing off the ground. Why wouldn't anybody fund this? This is the next great horror film, I thought.

We made it more titillating for whoever, the distribution companies, by making it a young couple that John Martin picks up. Because in the script, it's an old couple. It's this couple in their seventies. So you've


Mercury Films
MY SWEET SATAN
The Air King
A Film by Jim Van Bebber
Ricky Lives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got this old bag with saggy tits screaming as she watches her shriveled-up husband get cut up into ribbons by John Martin.

And the first scene of the goddamned film is, he gets a humanitarian award, life achievement award, which shows you can be a good person your whole life and it don't matter. There's nothing fair. You're gonna get slaughtered. Maybe. Maybe not.

So there's a whole full script for it?
Of course.

Have you ever shot any more of that?
No, that was it. We did that, and it went nowhere.

But that's how Gary Blair Smith of Plasma Films found you.
Yeah, that was the reason he hired me.

He looked at me straight on and said, "Have you seen Roadkill?"
It's the reason he hired me. He told me that.

He's like the sole Canadian guy that wants to see that stuff happen.
He's a real splattermeister. I knew I was in good hands when I walked in and I saw his Pinhead model there. While I was there he received in the mail this Leatherface model thing. And I was like, "Shit, man, this guy is right here. He's right in line with my way of thinking."

And he's so great. I would love for something to happen. He's so pro. The guy is good. He introduced me to what it's really like, to be a director on a professional crew. Where you have departments, you have department heads, and that's who you answer to.

Hey, Gary, if you read this, let's get something cooking!

The thing is though, I think he wanted a million for Chunk Blower.
But that's not unrealistic. We wanted to do it right, with the right people.

It looked fucking beautiful.

Makeup effects and editing *Deadbeat at Dawn*.

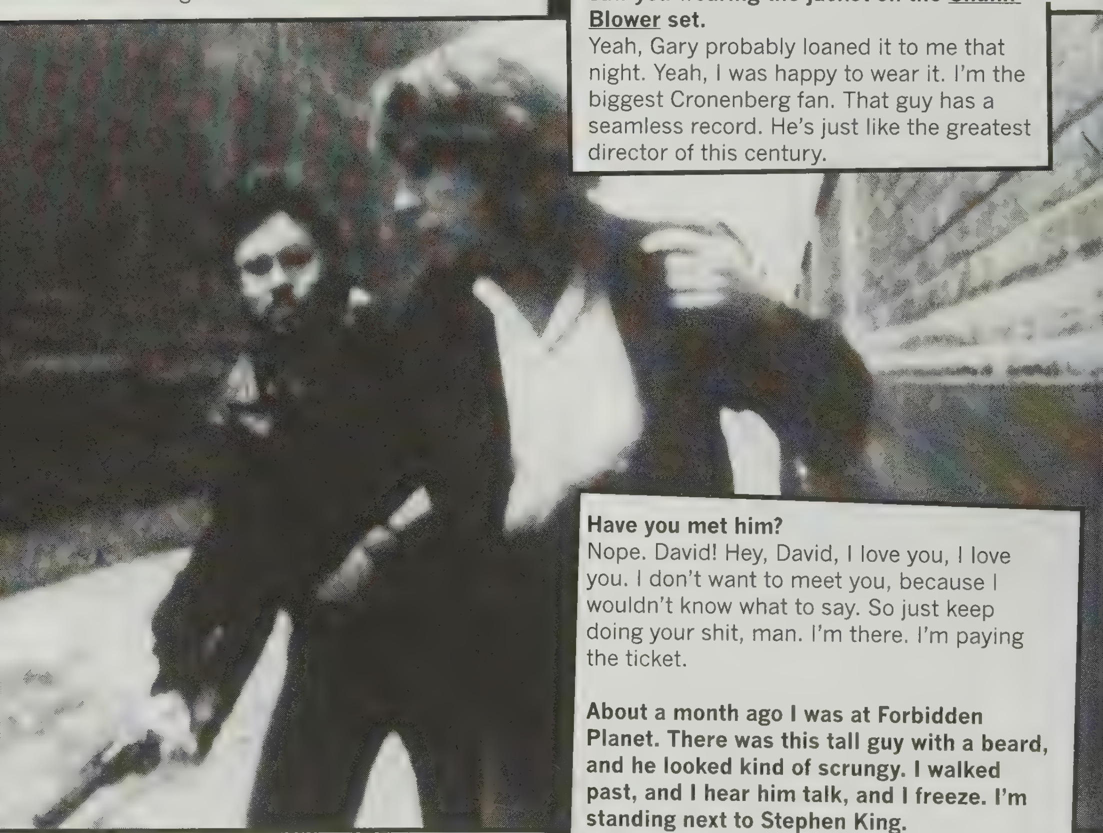
Cyrus Block, the DP, made that happen.

Yeah, I know, The Fly II.
And Skinny Puppy. He knew the Vancouver market, and he was working with the best. On Spasmolytic, we had the effects guys from Flesh Gordon II. They just outdid themselves. They brought out shit that they didn't have to, stuff that we didn't pay for, just because they got the fever in those two-day shoots, because there was a fever going. It was a good time.

I watched that again and noticed his name in the end credits, and I was like, "Wait, could this be like, the same guy?"
Sure. Gary worked on The Fly and he worked on Dead Ringers. He's got the jacket from when it was called Twins.

Didn't you work on that, too?
Oh, fuck no.

Okay, you were just wearing the jacket. I saw you wearing the jacket on the Chunk Blower set.
Yeah, Gary probably loaned it to me that night. Yeah, I was happy to wear it. I'm the biggest Cronenberg fan. That guy has a seamless record. He's just like the greatest director of this century.



Have you met him?
Nope. David! Hey, David, I love you, I love you. I don't want to meet you, because I wouldn't know what to say. So just keep doing your shit, man. I'm there. I'm paying the ticket.

About a month ago I was at Forbidden Planet. There was this tall guy with a beard, and he looked kind of scrungy. I walked past, and I hear him talk, and I freeze. I'm standing next to Stephen King.
Oh, no way!

I took a step towards him, and he walked away. I was like, fuck. But I used to write him letters, from like age ten to sixteen. I got six letters back. I had to say hi.
Never. I always admired the man. Still do. Never wrote him. I wouldn't know what to say. Like, Cronenberg. It's like, I met Raimi face to face, and I was speechless. Really,

Whose decision is it to completely scrap the killer tow truck driver for Chas. Balun's version of the script?
Gary's. Because it started with Gary and Alan Zweig.

Alan Zweig was a driver on Videodrome.
Great.

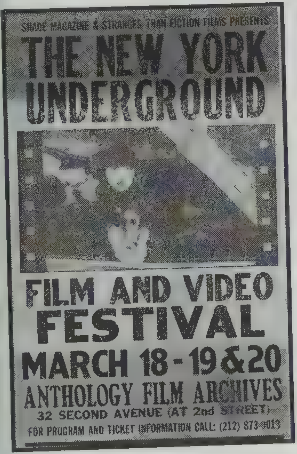
Goose in action in *Deadbeat at Dawn*.
Courtesy Dark Sky Films.

I was blabbering about something stupid. I don't know what to say to those guys. I'm like, in awe. These are like the guys that get me going in the morning.

I met Sam when I was sixteen at the Seattle International Film Festival. He brought Crime Wave.
You kind of look like Raimi.

That's how come we met! This woman came up to me and said, "Oh, Sam, it's so good to see you again." And I was like, "What?"
That'd be fun.

And then he came up and said, "Yeah, we really do." And he wrote a letter to me about that. The Cinefantastique thing was really good.
It was, man. That was so personal. Like, color photos and toys.



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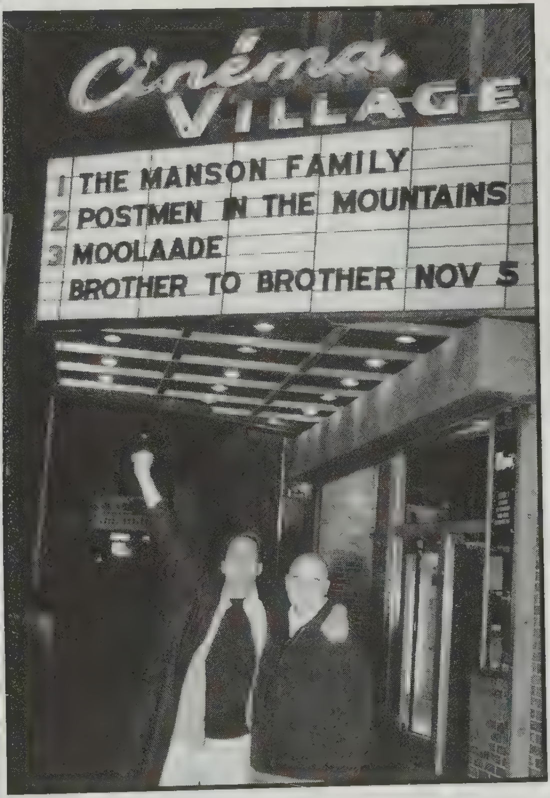
I kept that, yeah.
I've got that one and the Texas Chain Saw Massacre retrospective. Because, man, that is just a movie.

Yeah, I've got the issue of GoreZone with your page. Number 13.
Well, I bought it, of course. God, it was just so happening for a while. I wish Chunk Blower would have really taken off. The time was 1990. That was it. Gary was doing this thing in Canada. It wouldn't get released in Canada.

He wanted to make the film that couldn't have been made at that time. All the stars and planets were against him. It was all wrong.

He sent you tapes of what's been going on with him recently, right?
No, he hasn't. I get like, a drunken postcard every year. I call him up, and I catch him. He's like, "Well, I'm just about ready to have dinner with this girlfriend, and I'll call you back." And he doesn't call me back. I don't hold that against him. I love the guy. I think if we ever got something going, it would be great. Because I've worked with him twice, and I'd work with him twenty-two times more.



Yeah, he sent me a tape with your videos, Spasmolytic and stuff. Every video he's done. It was when Naked Lunch was coming out, so I guess it was a year-and-a-half, two years ago. But lately he's been doing all these pop videos.
I don't know nothing. I haven't talked to him; I can't say nothing.

But he and Chas. must still be talking, then, about Chunk Blower.
I don't think so. Because I talked to Chas. and I get the impression that he hasn't talked to Gary in as long as I have. Hey, man, we're all still very young. It can all still fall together.

Jim and Michael T. Capone at the New York premiere of *The Manson Family*, 2004. Photo Shade Rupe.

And I am certainly not one to upset the wagon. I hope it does.

How old were you when you started Deadbeat?
I was nineteen.

So you grew up with that movie.
I did, yeah. Ages nineteen to twenty-three.

Do you have My Sweet Satan with you here?
There's no VCR.

The girls in court in *The Manson Family.*

It would be kind of cool.
Have you seen it?

No, it's the only thing I haven't seen. I even called the number in the last page of Psychotronic, with the picture of you. It says, "You can call this video company." And I called them up, and they were like, "Oh, it's not available."

Soon, bro, soon.

You got your financing. Are you still planning on making Roadkill into a feature?
Of course.

That's going to happen.
I want to make it in 35mm. I want to spend whatever is necessary to realize the script to its full potential.

Is John Martin also a cannibal?

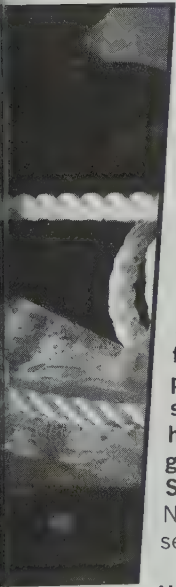
Oh, sure he is. That's what he is. You're going to be right there with him all the time. It's his movie. It's like, here you go. I can't wait to see Schramm, 'cause that'll tell me what I've got to rewrite, I guess. Because who could get closer? Buttgereit's amazing. The man.

From top: Jay's end in *The Manson Family*, and Jim behind Satan on the set of *The Manson Family*

You know, Jack Stevenson tours around with a 16mm print of Nekromantik.
I'd like to see that. That would be great.

How did you become involved with Chunk Blower?
Gary Blair Smith called me. Told me about it. Sent me a treatment. Hired me because of Roadkill.

How did he see it?



Chas. sent him a tape. Chas. was the intro. He sent him a tape of, I think, American Nightmares, which was Buddy G.'s original version of Combat Shock. And he sent him Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer, and he sent him Roadkill.

Good company.
Yeah, blah-blah-blah. We did it, and it was great; it was pro.

So if Jörg Buttgereit gets money for his stuff, there's got to be people who are willing to see something like what you're doing happen. Has anybody? Have you gotten anything like that at all? Someone calling and saying—?
Not at all. None at all. They've got to see it.

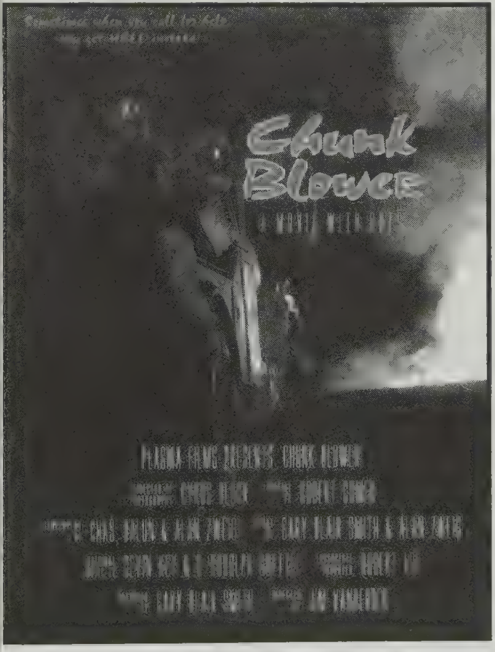
How did you get Charlie's Family together?
Charlie's Family came to life at the final stages of Deadbeat in the fall of 88. And we jumped right into it in the fall of 88. We spent thirty grand and shot a bunch that I'm going to cut out of the final thing. Half of it sucked. It wasn't salvageable.

Charlie's Family is all of a sudden like Deadbeat, where we have some mediocre shit replaced by really good stuff. I'm proud of the film, though. A lot more proud than I am of Deadbeat.

I feel it's consistent throughout. I'm pleased with, for the most part, its composition and performances. The photography for that by Mike King, who has definitely become some sort of a cinematographer, he was great. And it's gonna bury everything that anybody's seen that I've done.

Did you ever read John Aes-Nihil? That catalog I sent you? On all the Manson shit?
No. What I felt I needed, I already have. A lot of tapes. Tom Snyder and Manson, and on and on.

Have you ever talked with any of the Family?
No. And I have no desire to. I would rather talk to them after they see the film, and

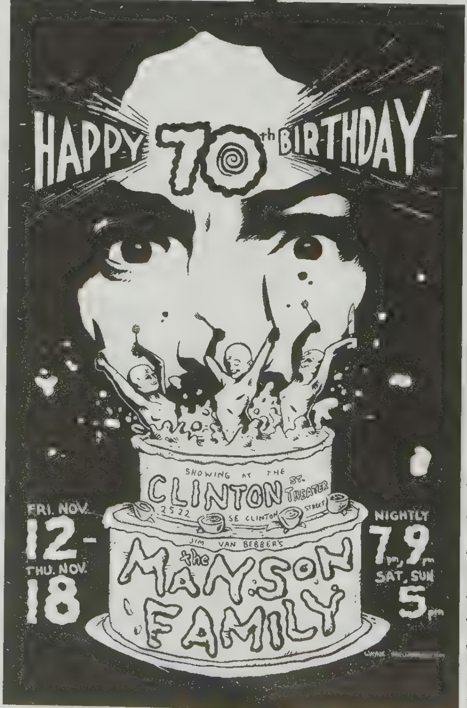


From top: Original flyer for the proposed feature *Chunk Blower*, and Satanic bullies in *My Sweet Satan*.

see what they think of my representation. Because I'm basing this—I told them it's a meditation on what the media has delivered, because I have access to everything that's available on videotape and in print. And that's what this film is made up of.

Most teenagers roast marshmallows... On the set of *My Sweet Satan.*

I wasn't there, for crying out loud, and I'm not going to talk to these fuckers, because they would lie to me anyway. Especially Manson. I don't need that shit. I'm just making a film about something that happened in history. It's no different from, say, the Donner Party. Get that straight, Charlie!



Flyer for the Clinton Street Theater premiere of *The Manson Family.* Art Wayne Shellabarger.

There's a lot of interest in serial killers these days. People are interested in Charlie's Family.

It's Americana, it's folklore. It's like, this is all a part of our heritage. We've got to focus our lives around this bullshit.

Yeah, we can look at this and have recorded history of real human events where people are tested beyond their limits, be it drugs, or hunger.

Are you going to try to get it out there? Are you going to try to get an opening?

I'm gonna try my damnedest. I don't know what's going to happen. I got screwed on Deadbeat. This film could be buried and never seen. But I hope not. I'm gonna try.

It's like, that guy Roger in Dawn of the Dead, he's going, "I'll come back, but I'm gonna try not to... I'm gonna try..."

Has Film Threat talked about doing that at all?

We're going to release a remastered version of Roadkill, which is great, because the original, whatever anybody's seen of Roadkill was transferred to 3/4 off of this TV station's Rank Cintel, and it sucked.

I know, because I've seen the camera original projected. We shot it on 7240 reversal film, by the way. So the camera original, not the negative, looks kick ass. I've seen it. It's a positive; it's not a negative. I've seen it, and it looks great.

And that's what we're going to have transferred to one-inch, and that's what it's going to be cut into. We're going to be able to remix the sound. And that's going to be great. That's really the reason I'm going with them.

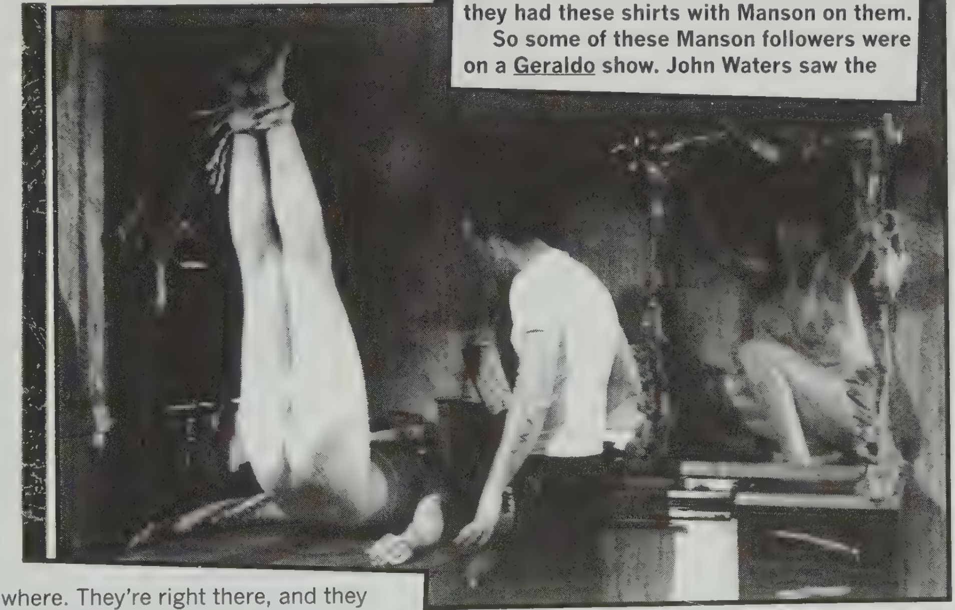
We're going to have My Sweet Satan on there and Doper, Mike King's great documentary, which got its New York premiere here this weekend. I was really happy; I wish he could have been here. Did you like it?

Yeah, it was fun. There were these two kids talking. And one of them said, "Oh, man, I can't believe the film's opening tonight. They're showing Doper. We're going to see Doper."

See, I'm so glad that Film Threat has taken all three on, because it shows the diversity inherent in our approach. Because that's Mike's film, my cinematographer and producer of Deadbeat and Charlie's Family, and he's a different cat than I am. Together, right now, at least we're trying to get a rung up on the ladder so that we can do our shit. That's it.

How did Film Threat find you?
I called them. Yeah, 'cause we originally had to deal with Tempe, but J.R. Bookwalter sold that company to Tom Brown. I knew Film Threat had the machinery. They're not going anywhere. They're right there, and they publicize their shit. So why not?

I want people to see it, that's the main thing, and I want to be able to pay back the investors, that's the second thing.



Everything a kitchen needs. A scene from *Roadkill*.

At the Seattle Film Festival I saw Re-Animator, From Beyond, Evil Dead, Evil Dead II, Death Warmed Up, Bad Taste. That's where they played, right over in Seattle at midnight. And the audiences love it. It's like, there's this market. It's like, Charlie's Family, man. There's so much interest in that.
I hope so.

What kind of a story angle did you take with Charlie's Family? Do we get the Manson story? Manson's childhood, starting the Family? Or do we just go right into the Family?
Not at all. It's not really about Manson at all. Its focus is more on Tex Watson and the people who actually did the killing. Manson's a peripheral figure. It concentrates more on the people who actually worked out his shit and killed everybody.

I was in San Francisco, and staying at a friend's house, and this girl there worked at Amoeba, this clothes store on Haight. And they had these shirts with Manson on them.

So some of these Manson followers were on a Geraldo show. John Waters saw the show, and he called the store to get the clothes. And my friend was just putting the packages together, and this chick walks in and she goes, "How can you guys sell those shirts and not give any money to Charlie?" I also didn't know who it was. And she talked for a while and went on. And then she lifted up her hair and it was Sandra Good. Yeah, she had the scar.
Fuck.

In New York, you have to deal with reality all the time. So it's nice to get into fiction. Are you planning any more true horror stories?
[With a leering smile] We'll see.

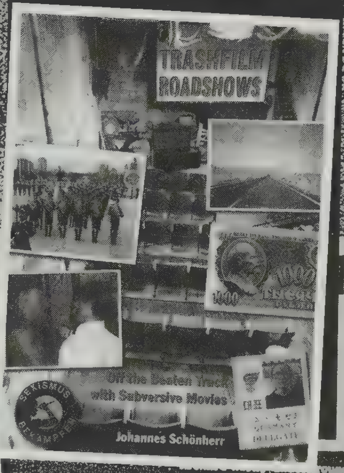
[illegible] holding a skull in his gravedigging days. [illegible] Cemetery, Leipzig, 1983. Photo Annett [illegible]

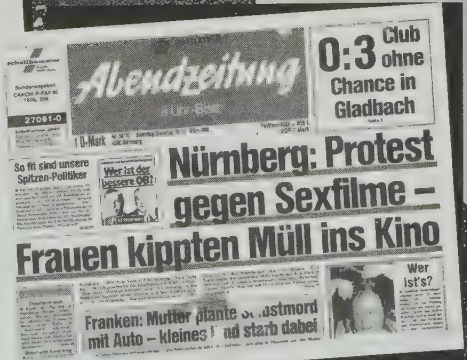
"Of course, he would never seize a strange movie."

JOHANNES SCHÖNHERR

ONE OF THE MORE JOYOUS PERIODS in my own New York history was the early 90s. The New York Underground Film Festival was rebranded through Todd Phillips' assistance, cell phones did not yet exist, the internet wasn't even a word, and people still went to movies. Through the magic of men like Jack Stevenson and Johannes Schönherr movies were still a thing of wonder, a joy to discover, and a darn good night out with some friends. Johannes took over Manhattan's Cinema Village when it was still a classic single screen and premiered several bizarre films for the city's audiences, including Peter Jackson's Bad Taste, and the oft-discussed and little-seen Army Medicine in Vietnam.

In later years Johannes would team up with the northwest's Dennis Bartok and open the decrepit Lighthouse Theater, a short-lived, well-remembered venture, and one of the last attempts at bohemian artistry in the city before the emergence of the blandness of Newer York. Introduced through Jack Stevenson and Mike Kuchar, I met Johannes while he was tending duties at New York's Millenium Film Archive where we conducted this interview prior to his Headpress book Trashfilm Roadshows.





Abendzeitung

0:3 Club ohne Chance in Gladbach

Nürnberg: Protest gegen Sexfilme – Frauen kippten Müll ins Kino

So fit sind unsere Spitzen-Politiker

Wer ist der bessere OB?

Franken: Mutter plante Selbstmord mit Auto – kleines Kind starb dabei

Wer ist's?

SEX VS GUNS

Johannes' Nick Zedd show made the front page of the Nürnberg Abendzeitung.

SHADE RUPE: You once had a rather interesting career.

JOHANNES SCHÖNHERR: Yeah, I was a gravedigger in Leipzig. I dug graves and gave funeral speeches for two years. That was in the communist times over there, and to be employed at a cemetery got you away from all the hassles from the communists that you had to face going to school or working in some more mainstream job. I wasn't into film programming yet. It's hard to imagine how that might have worked with the communists around. Not at all, I guess. No prints available to private persons, no projectors, nothing.

In Europe, being a gravedigger means being a sort of a ghoul too. People aren't buried there forever. You just rent a grave for twenty-five or fifty years, and as soon as your payment expires someone else gets buried at the spot. At least as long as you aren't any sort of a celebrity and it isn't some important historical graveyard.

Every time we dug up a grave, we found the skeleton of the old inhabitant. We gave the skulls away as birthday gifts. The cemetery I worked at didn't have a cooling system for its morgue. So, in the summer, you got to know the smell of death really well. And of course, Leipzig was the right city for that experience. A beautiful old town just rotting away. Total decay everywhere.

When did you first start screening films?
After I moved to West Germany in 1983, I joined the Kino im KOMM collective in Nuremberg in 1985. From then on I showed midnight-type movies from the early evening on. I think the first show I actually organized by myself was for Triumph of the Will. It's restricted in Germany and you have to arrange some kind of seminar to go with the screening. So I made a simple introduction and talked a bit before it started.

How were you coming in contact with American Underground films in Germany?
Through a scandal in the first place. In 1987 feminists attacked the Eiszeit-Kino in Berlin for showing Richard Kern's Fingered. They smashed the projector, robbed the money box and so on. Of course that was pretty big in the press then, combined with a lot of discussions on violent porn and censorship. I then read in some magazine that the film was shown in some other place, so I called that cinema and asked them where I could get the print, because at that time I was already booking programs for the Kino im KOMM in Nuremberg. They told me they had shown it on video and they gave me the number of that video distributor.

Finally, I got the film print from somewhere else and screened it, but by contacting this guy, Uwe Hamm-Fürhölter, I got in direct contact with all the people over here. He knew Richard Kern, Nick Zedd, and all the other people, and was preparing a Nick Zedd tour through Germany at that time. I was running an off-cinema

Johannes visiting his East German hometown of Leipzig after the Wall came down, 1990. Photo Joachim Kolbe.
Next page: Jack Stevenson in Moscow, 1992. Photo Michael Zettler.

JOHANNES SCHÖNHERR

press releases

kino im kommen

INFORMATION SERVICE / FILM DISTRIBUTION / TOUR ORGANISATION

EUROPEAN TOURS

SPRING 92

MARION EATON
MIKE KUCHAR
JACK STEVENSON

information network so naturally we worked together a lot.

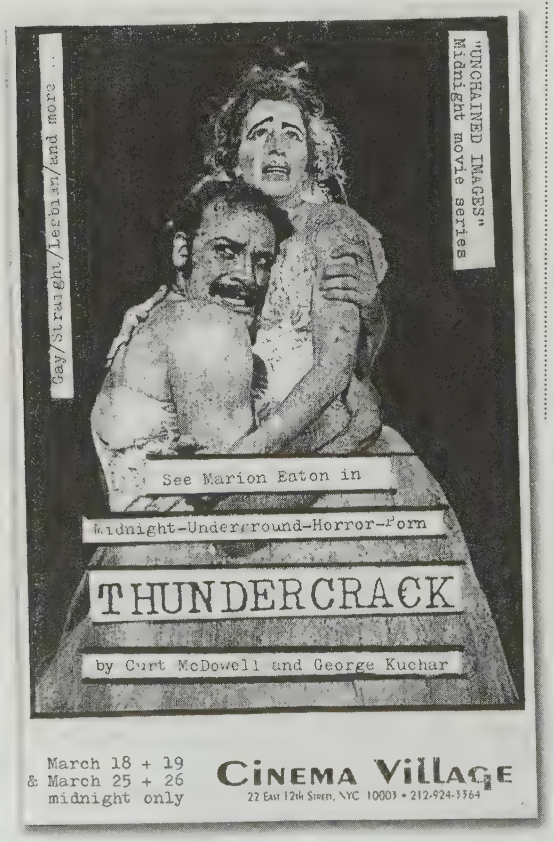
Nick Zedd's show in Nuremberg in March 1990 was one of the most successful shows I ever did over there. Feminists attacked it, and Nick got on the title page of the weekend edition of the local tabloid.

Why?
These feminists thought that the movies were pornographic, so they threw eggs at the screen and cat shit and flyers in the theater. It was a pretty good performance. A lot of people thought that Nick and I had arranged it to spice the program up.

A week before Nick's show, I had Alyce Wittenstein in Nuremberg and she invited me to come over to America for a visit. I came here with some German short films and set up a couple of shows in Philadelphia, D.C., New York and Boston. In Boston, I came into contact with Jack Stevenson. I had been arranging tours for short film packages through Germany for a while then, and Jack asked me to route some of his exploitation and educational programs through Germany. His programs proved to be much more successful than anything I ever did for the London Filmmakers Co-op.

I came back to New York in early 1991 and arranged a German tour for Richard Kern. So one thing came to another and I got more and more involved in that stuff.

Do these shows get attacked by feminists often? I've read that the Werkstattkino in Munich gets in trouble a lot.
Munich is a very conservative town and they have problems with public prosecutors, but not that much with the leftists. They had troubles with leftists recently when they showed Beruf Neonazi. It's a documentary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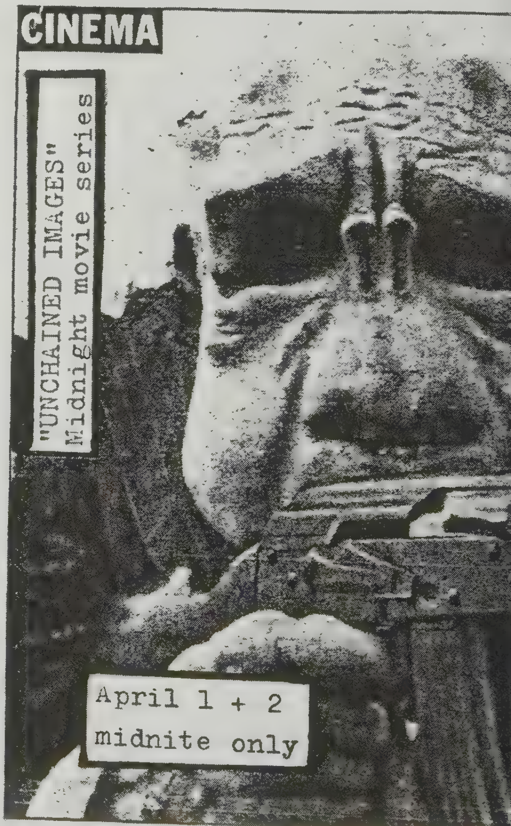
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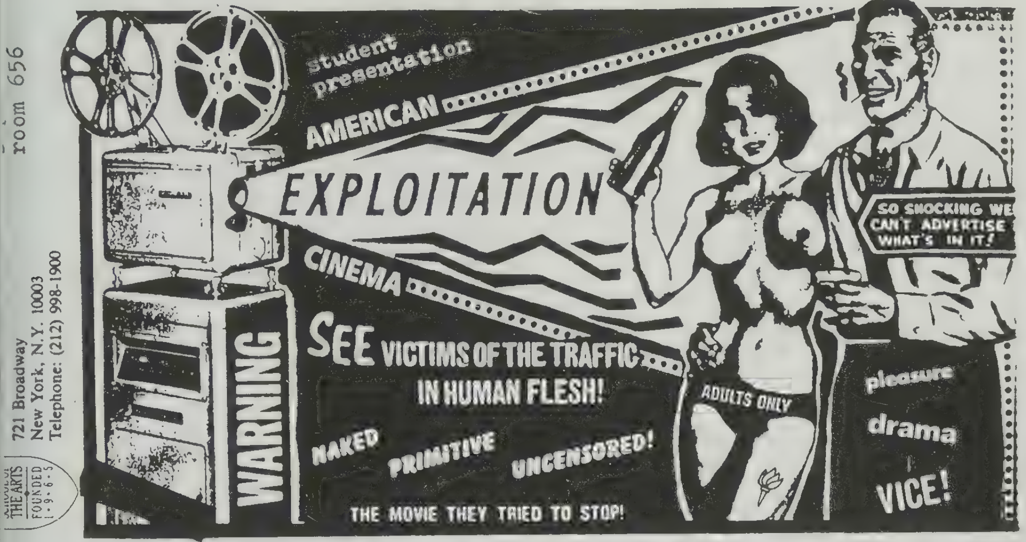
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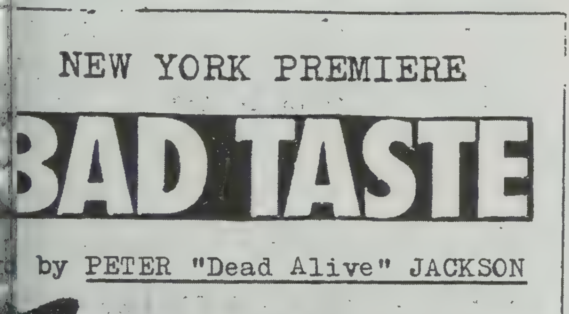
NEW YORK PREMIERE
BAD TASTE
by PETER "Dead Alive" JACKSON
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Flyer for the New York premiere of Peter Jackson's *Bad Taste*. Courtesy Johannes Schönherr.

about a couple of neo-Nazis and it features Bela Althans for quite a big part of the film. He's not that dumb skinhead the German press always claims neo-Nazis are. He is a really clever, intelligent guy. The movie was funded by five German states; they wanted the funding back after critics claimed in some magazine that the film glorifies neo-Nazis. Trials were held to prohibit the movie. Of course, that was a film the Werkstattkino was interested in, they always go for the extreme stuff, the stuff nobody else will show.

Militant anti-fascists protested the shows at the Werkstattkino and had picketers there to prevent people from watching the film. The cinema got a lot of threats on the phone. Someone always had to stay overnight at the cinema to protect the film. But otherwise, they get sued by prosecutors all the time, for showing films that 'glorify violence' like The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2 and Mother's Day.

Berlin and Nuremberg are different. They are more liberal cities, but there the problems with leftists are bigger. They consider Kreuzberg, the neighborhood in Berlin where the Eiszeit is located, and the KOMM, a big communication center in Nuremberg, of which the Kino im KOMM is a part, as their territories where they try

to reign and so impose their laws onto the whole scenery. They are as repressive as the laws of the rightists.

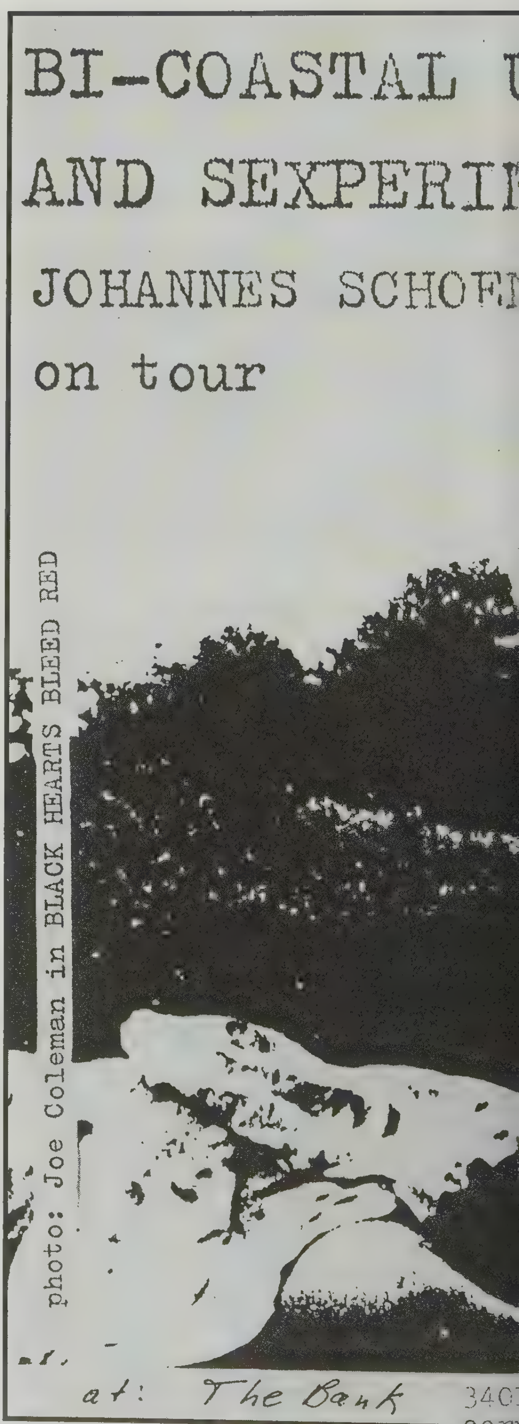
I haven't heard of any problems like that with underground films in America.
No. But it might come eventually, with all the PC craze going on and people like Dworkin and MacKinnon propagating censorship very similar to the situation exercised by the German leftists and feminists.

Are left-wing radicals really attacking these films?
They hate pornography. Since the Nick Zedd show four years ago they boycotted the Kino im KOMM. But they wouldn't watch anything there anyway. A while after Nick's show I did some radio interview with a local alternative station, pretty much like WFMU is here. They asked me, in connection with a Doris Wishman show, if I expected any protests from the leftists. I said no, but if they would come it would be okay with me; it always creates great newspaper write-ups and scandals are great fun anyway.

A couple of weeks after that a flyer came out that said I should watch my back and how much they hated me for those radio remarks. There were rumors that they planned some action against Hated, the G.G. Allin documentary, when it was shown there last year, but nothing of that materialized since they knew I would just exploit their actions.

So censorship is stronger in Germany than it is here in America?
Censorship is different over there. You have all-night-long 60s and 70s exploitation movies on regular TV, not cable, mostly softcore porn. Nobody cares. The censorship is mainly against violent pictures.

Were you able to see any of the films in your midnight series in Germany?
Bad Taste got a theatrical release over there. Meet the Feebles, Peter Jackson's second movie, got a really big release in a dubbed version. Yeah, I had seen most of the films over there before I programmed them into the series here.



BI-COASTAL

AND SEXPERI

JOHANNES SCHO

on tour

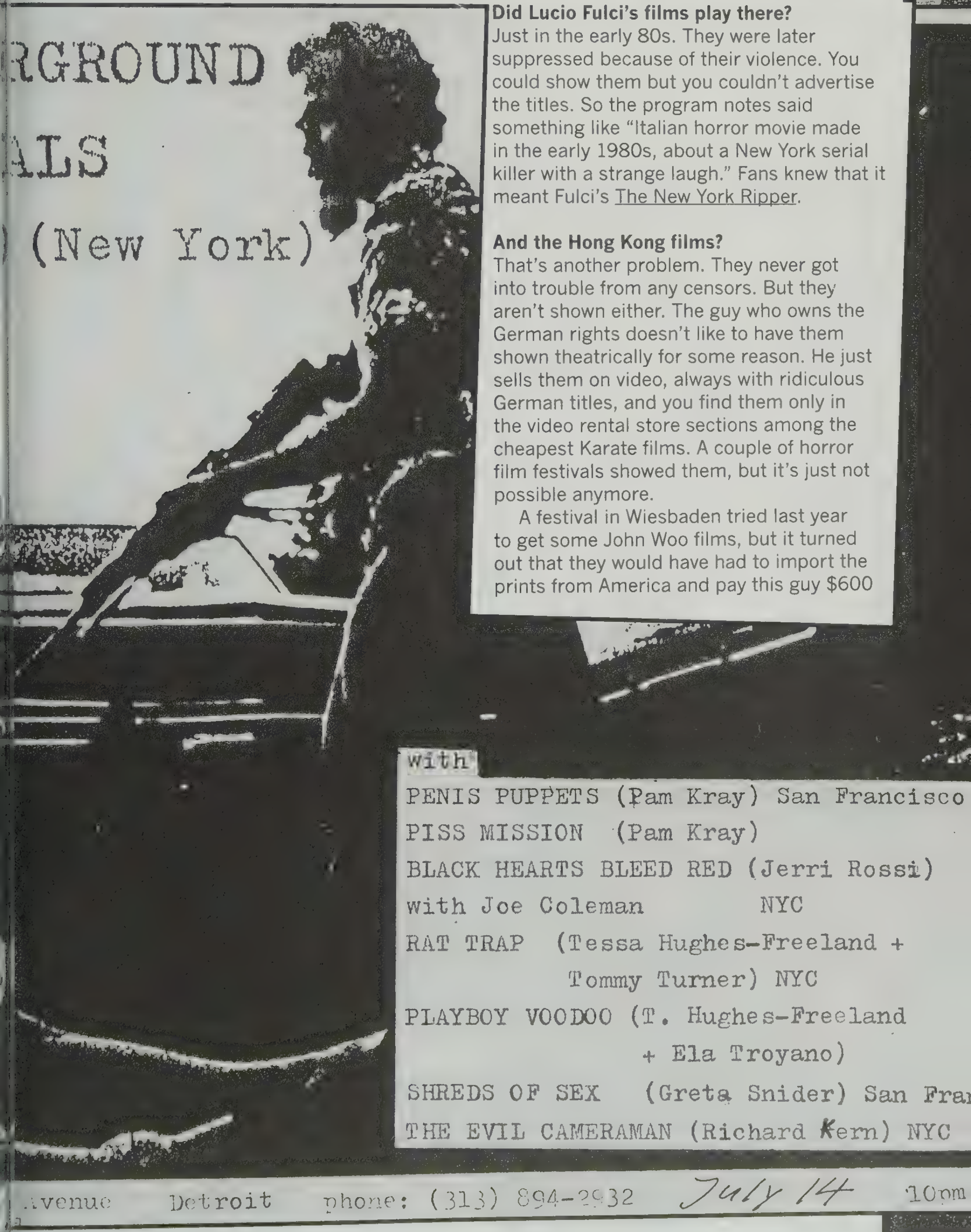
photo: Joe Coleman in BLACK HEARTS BLEED RED

at: The Bank 340

Did Lucio Fulci's films play there?
Just in the early 80s. They were later suppressed because of their violence. You could show them but you couldn't advertise the titles. So the program notes said something like "Italian horror movie made in the early 1980s, about a New York serial killer with a strange laugh." Fans knew that it meant Fulci's The New York Ripper.

And the Hong Kong films?
That's another problem. They never got into trouble from any censors. But they aren't shown either. The guy who owns the German rights doesn't like to have them shown theatrically for some reason. He just sells them on video, always with ridiculous German titles, and you find them only in the video rental store sections among the cheapest Karate films. A couple of horror film festivals showed them, but it's just not possible anymore.

A festival in Wiesbaden tried last year to get some John Woo films, but it turned out that they would have had to import the prints from America and pay this guy $600



RGROUND

ALS

) (New York)

with

PENIS PUPPETS (Pam Kray) San Francisco
PISS MISSION (Pam Kray)
BLACK HEARTS BLEED RED (Jerri Rossi)
with Joe Coleman NYC
RAT TRAP (Tessa Hughes-Freeland +
Tommy Turner) NYC
PLAYBOY VOODOO (T. Hughes-Freeland
+ Ela Troyano)
SHREDS OF SEX (Greta Snider) San Fran
THE EVIL CAMERAMAN (Richard Kern) NYC

venue Detroit phone: (313) 894-2932 July 14 10pm per film just to get the rights to show them in Germany. Of course, the festival went for some other movies then.

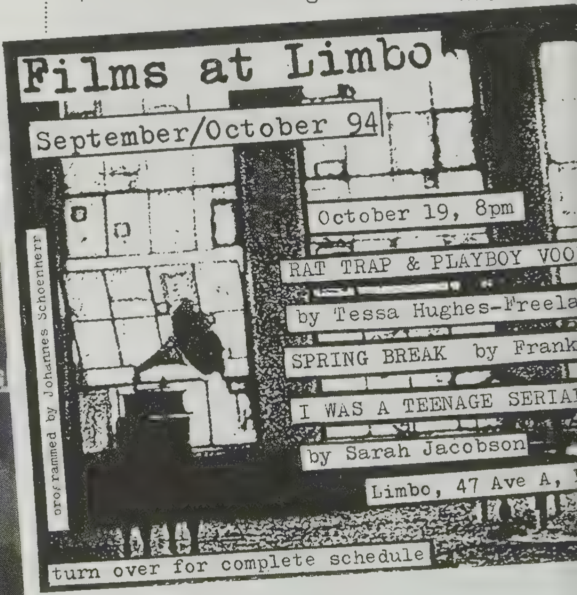
Did Nekromantik play theatrically in Germany?
Yes, it was a pretty big movie in the off-cinema circuit. It was the biggest German underground movie in the last ten years or so.

Why did they have so many problems with Nekromantik 2?
The only problem they had with it was when the film was seized at the Werkstattkino by a prosecutor who tries to get a name among his colleagues by seizing films and suing people. That's the reason why I won't say his name here. If he hadn't been around, nobody would have cared. But now the film is still in the middle of a lawsuit and nobody can show it in Germany legally. It is less bloody than Nekromantik, which didn't have any trouble at all.

How did you find out about Jim VanBebber?
Uwe Hamm-Fürhölter in Wiesbaden had a print of Deadbeat at Dawn and we screened it in Nuremberg. Uwe had a pretty bad car accident in 1992, he's still recovering from that. I hope he will be back in business at some point soon.

Are there any other German horror filmmakers that we should be seeing besides Jörg Buttgereit?
There used to be some in the 70s. Sleazy exploitation stuff, but today, not really. Christoph Schlingensief made The German Chainsaw Massacre. Schlingensief had invited me to do an interview with him there. It was really weird there, with Alfred Edel as a chainsaw killer, and with Dietrich Kuhlbrod as another chainsaw killer. Kuhlbrod is actually a prosecutor in Hamburg when he doesn't act for Schlingensief. Of course, he would never seize a strange movie. It was great to see him there all covered with fake blood chasing some actors through an abandoned steel factory.

Johannes in front of Dennis Nyback's Pike Street Cinema in Seattle, 1993. Photo Pam Kray.



Films at Limbo

September/October 94

programmed by Johannes Schoenherr

October 19, 8pm

RAT TRAP & PLAYBOY VOO

by Tessa Hughes-Freela

SPRING BREAK by Frank

I WAS A TEENAGE SERIA

by Sarah Jacobson

Limbo, 47 Ave A,

turn over for complete schedule

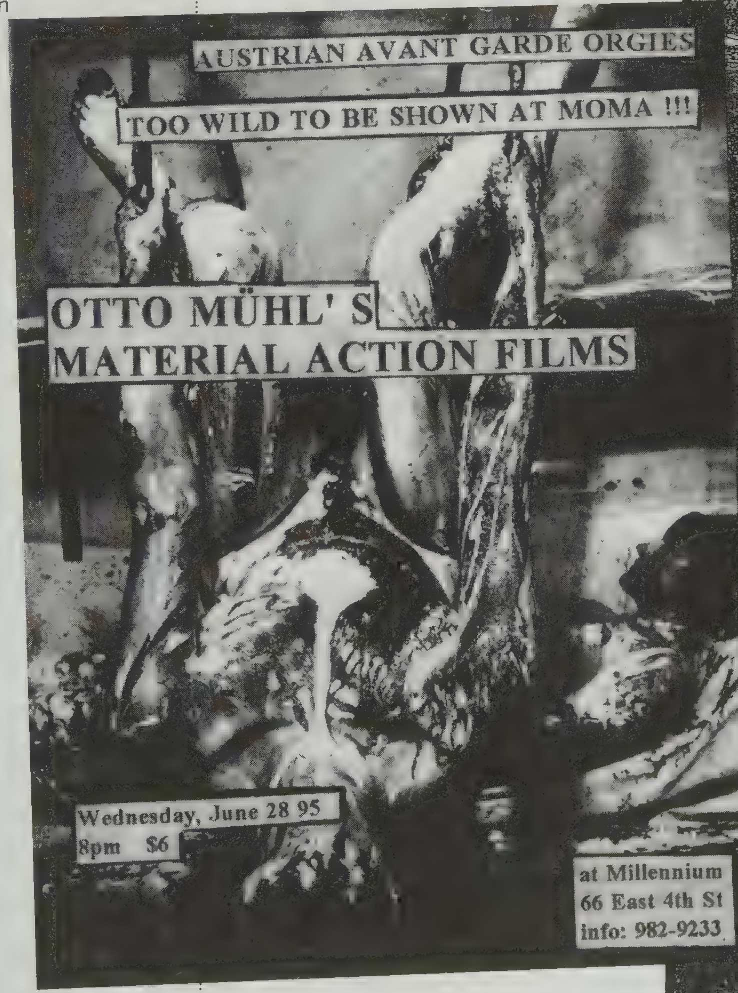
Is it a takeoff on The Texas Chain Saw Massacre?
In a way. It is about East Germans coming to the West in 1990 and the West Germans kill them and turn them into sausage. Good idea, but finally a much too arty film, with too much pseudo-surrealism going on. It was funnier to be on the set than to see the final movie.

Do American horror films play there at all? Here they most often go straight to video.
It is pretty much the same in Germany, but there are always people who try to get prints for the off-cinema circuit. The people from the Werkstattkino are great in doing that. The best country to see cheap American horror on the big screen is Russia. They have all the stuff you hardly ever hear about here.

Do they have many serial killers in Germany?
Not really. They had some great ones, like Fritz Haarmann in Hannover in the 20s who killed dozens of young boys, raped them, and sold their meat to butcher shops. But since the last really big one, Jürgen Bartsch in the Ruhr area in the 50s who killed and raped a couple of girls and died later in jail during a bungled castration operation which he hoped would take away his fatal drives, not too much went on.

Of course, Nuremberg got one in the early 70s, a mute and deaf casual worker who broke into cemeteries and sucked blood from corpses, and when that wasn't enough anymore he killed girls and sucked their blood. Marjan Vajda made a film about him in the 70s called Moskito—Der Schänder (Mosquito—The Desecrater). But altogether, there is not much going on in that way.

Russia is at the top of the mountain right now, with Chikatilo.



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If you can see these films on videotape, why show them in a theater?
I always like to see movies on a big screen. Whenever I see stuff on a television screen, I forget most of it soon after watching it. With a videotape you stop watching to get a beer, answer the phone, go into fast forward as soon as the movie slows down.

In a cinema, you can't do that. There is the film and you have to find your way into it.

Are there any films that you would want to show but can't get ahold of?
There are always unavailable films. But with my contacts in Europe I can get a lot of stuff usually unavailable here. I would love to show Men Behind the Sun, a Hong Kong movie about a World War II medical experimentation/concentration camp run by the Japanese, which I have no idea where to get. I would like to show International Guerrilla, the Pakistan-made kill-Salman-Rushdie propaganda movie, which has never shown theatrically anywhere in the Western hemisphere. I tried to get Café Flesh over to Germany and I couldn't get it but I can always show it here.

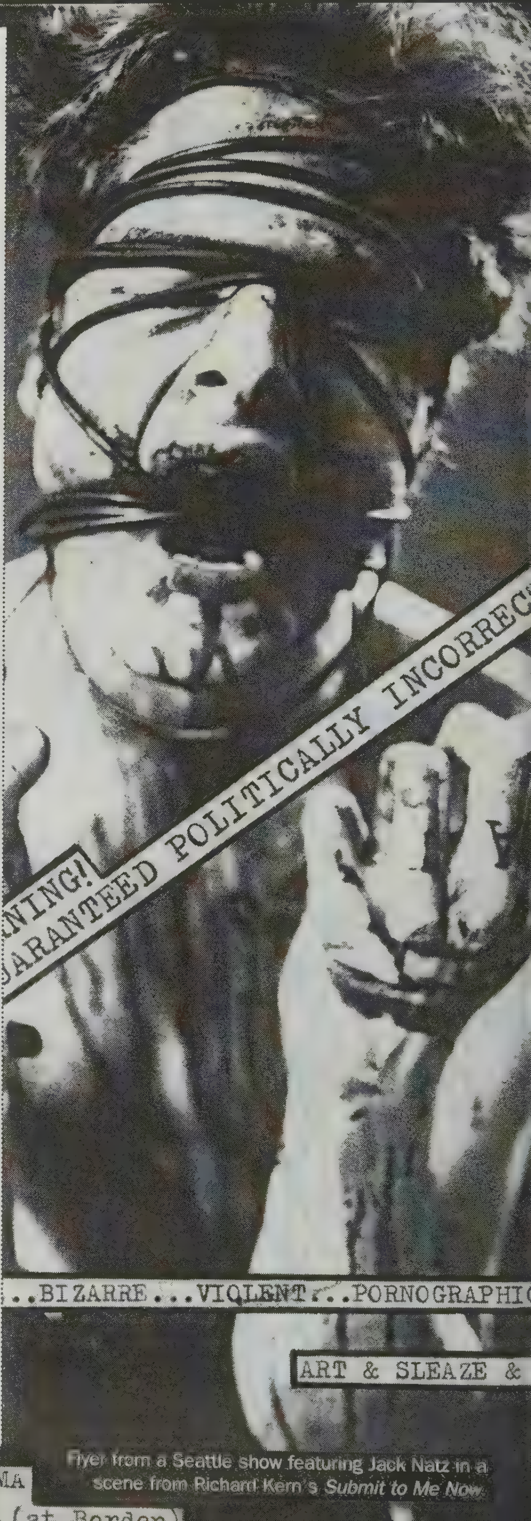
But at some point you can usually find what you're looking for. Just as I finally got Thundercrack! for a European tour, even with the main actress, Marion Eaton, traveling with the film and giving introductions.

What are the most intense films you've shown?
I've always liked Thundercrack! for being intense. Deadbeat at Dawn is a pretty intense film. Fingered is. There are a lot. Films that aren't intense don't interest me.

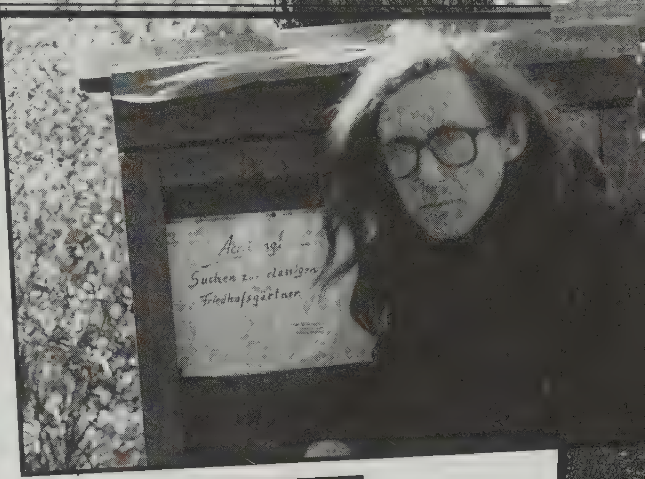
As a judge at the New York Underground Film Festival, do you see better films coming from the 'underground'?
Well, 'underground' always sounds extremely subversive, illegal and dangerous. Stag movies used to be real underground before the 60s, provocative art movies like Flaming Creatures and Un Chant d'Amour were underground movies. One risked getting thrown in jail for showing them.

Today, kiddie porn and snuff are the real underground movies, at least in America. It always depends on the laws of the country where the film is shown. In the Netherlands, kiddie porn is legal; in Pakistan they would probably execute you for showing a Russ Meyer movie.

Anyway, everything that's quite legal and just somehow provocative is pretty much independent filmmaking, as far-reaching as that term is. There is a lot of good stuff


NING!
ARANTEED POLITICALLY INCORREC
...BIZARRE...VIOLENT...PORNOGRAPHI
ART & SLEAZE &
PIKE STREET CINEMA
1108 Pike Street (at Boren)

Flyer from a Seattle show featuring Jack Natz in a scene from Richard Kern's *Submit to Me Now.*



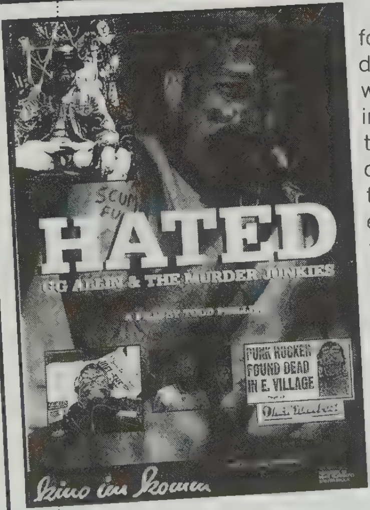
Johannes contemplates restarting his gravedigging career at Connewitz. (The sign reads: 'Attention! Looking for reliable cemetery gardener.') Photo Joachim Kolbe.

coming from the low-budget people like Jim VanBebber and Todd Phillips, probably the two most interesting guys in the States right now.

Although, it seems, there is not enough good stuff to fill a whole festival. There were a lot of just student films, without any daring aspects whatsoever.

These young filmmakers should definitely get a bit kinkier.

What are your next projects?
At the moment, I'm putting together a new series on the topic of excess for a gallery downtown, which will be shown in the fall under the title 'Visions of Excess'. With this series I'll explore the territory from kinky porn to the Vienna Aktionists, into body modifications up to total destruction of the body for the sake of the ultimate pleasure. From Satanist orgy porn from the 20s to G.G. Allin in Hated to Otto Mühl eating his own shit in Scheisskerl to Fakir Musafar's body alterations to... you will see.


HATED
GG ALLIN & THE MURDER JUNKIES
PUNK ROCKER FOUND DEAD IN E. VILLAGE

A 'History of New York Underground Films', underground in the sense Jonas Mekas used the word, is in preparation too. Starting with Hans Richter's late movies, then going into the stuff made by the people of the New American Cinema stuff, the more daring art-indie movies.

Right now I'm waiting for Jim VanBebber's Manson movie so I can organize a tour through Europe. ◉

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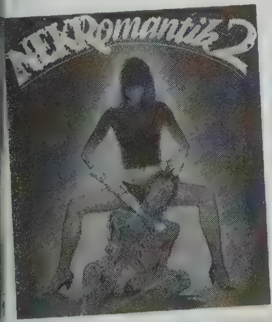
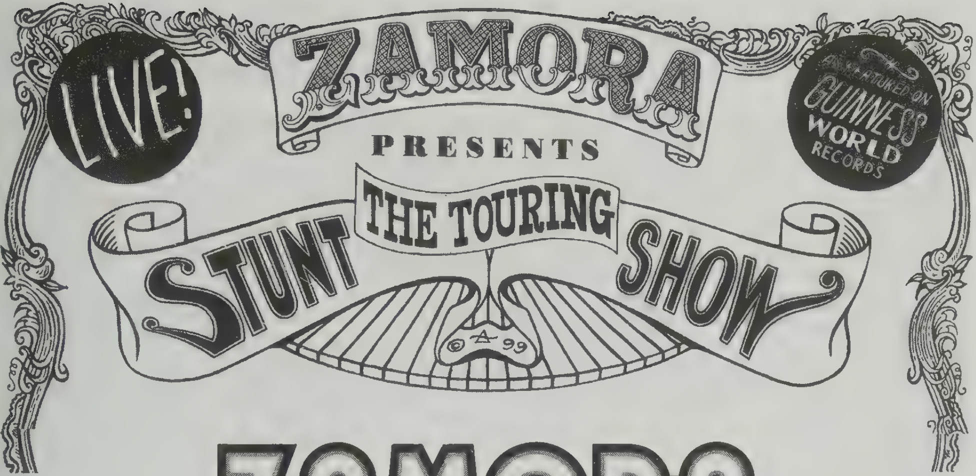


TORTURE KING

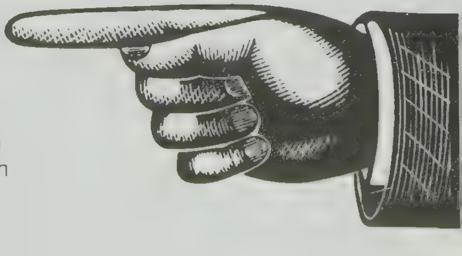
"That's what I would
think you'd do with one."



ZAMORA THE TORTURE KING

IT'S FUNNY SOMETIMES HOW YOUR wacky friends and acquaintances become international superstars. I think I first met Tim Cridland, or Timm Grimm, or Zamora, when he was breathing fire with Matt 'The Tube' Crowley in Sarondae Wolf and Tom Prince's backyard on Capitol Hill. I later stayed in Tim's loft at Mark Schomburg's dada-infused Incubator performance and workspace in downtown Seattle. Tim was well-known for his forays into bizarre beliefs and behavior, and his melding these interests with his body-test investigations resulted in his inclusion in Jim Rose's Circus Sideshow and their touring Lollapalooza shows.

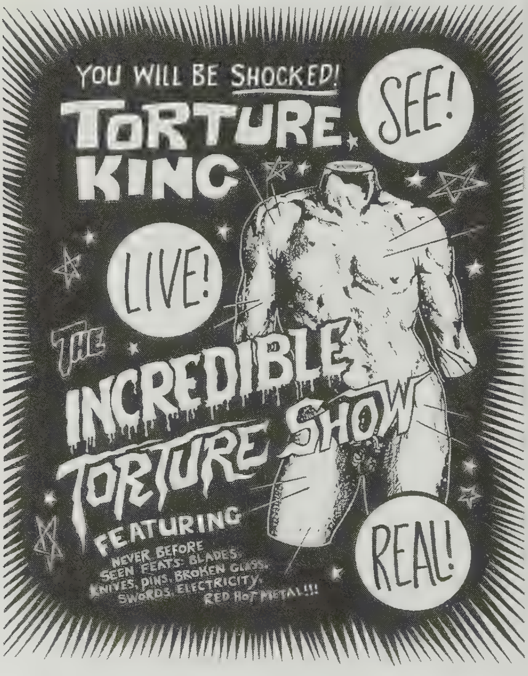
One of my favorite times was Timm hooking himself up with light bulbs and igniting the filaments with electricity from Dale Travous' Tesla coil in the basement space of Incubator. Ah, those were the days… For a while Timm made his main home in Las Vegas as an entertainer extraordinaire, and currently he tours with John Shaw's Hellzapoppin show.



SHADE RUPE: How did you get involved in body manipulation?
TIMM GRIMM: I had a book when I was in elementary school that had illustrations of street performers in India, and one of the pictures was of the fakirs doing their human pincushion act. That's where they stick the skewers through their cheeks and the skin of their arms. I thought it was

pretty interesting. I guess maybe in some ways I shouldn't have. That's what people think, that it's kind of a morbid interest. But I didn't see any reason not to think it's kind of a cool thing.

What were some of the first things you were doing after seeing those pictures?
Well, I was fascinated by the pictures. The first things I did like that was sticking sewing pins in the skin of my forearm. Pinching up the skin, putting sewing pins, straight pins, through the forearm skin.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THE INCREDIBLE TORTURE SHOW
FEATURING
NEVER BEFORE SEEN FEATS: BLADES, KNIVES, PINS, BROKEN GLASS, SWORDS, ELECTRICITY, RED HOT METAL!!!
REAL!

And you weren't feeling any pain?
Oh, I wouldn't say that.

But you were just obsessed with trying to duplicate the Indians?
Yeah, it was a while before I thought I should go and try that myself, but I was moving in on it, and read about it enough and figured I'd give it a try. It was something that I could amuse some of my classmates with. Some of my classmates were amused by it. The teachers were certainly not amused.

You were doing it during school?
Yes. At one point, I remember doing it in school, during a home economics class. I remember doing it, and the teacher not being too happy with me. I remember doing it in art class, too.

Were you also studying Indian meditation techniques or any other type of meditation?
I did look into hypnosis, self-hypnosis, but not any archaic spiritual system. It was more straightforward, like clinical hypnosis without any mysticism attached to it.

I came across that independently, without the piercing stuff, and mixed the two together. I haven't any formal schooling, any mystical philosophy to get to these states. Standard self-hypnosis I would call it.

What sort of techniques did you use, then? What were you doing when you were beginning? Like your pinching up your flesh to put a needle through.
None. I just took it. I was just pinching it up and pushing them through basically. Taking it, ya know? If you keep doing that, you also get in a different relationship with pain. As opposed to something that accidentally happens to you, it's now planned, and it's available to me because I have expectations. So you're not at all caught by surprise. And you're also looking for a good outcome from the pain. It gave me a different relationship to pain as I kept doing that. Instead of being something that happens accidentally, the pain becomes something that is deliberate, and you have different expectations from it. It's like some Heisenberg uncertainty principle.

Did you find with some of the pain that you felt as if you were experiencing an altered state of consciousness?
I would say it's more like there's a feedback thing going on, where the state is being altered, not necessarily by the pain, but just that leap that happens where the pain changes and the sensation becomes something entirely different. But it's not something that's instantaneous.

After amusing your classmates, were you driven to try larger needles, nails, other

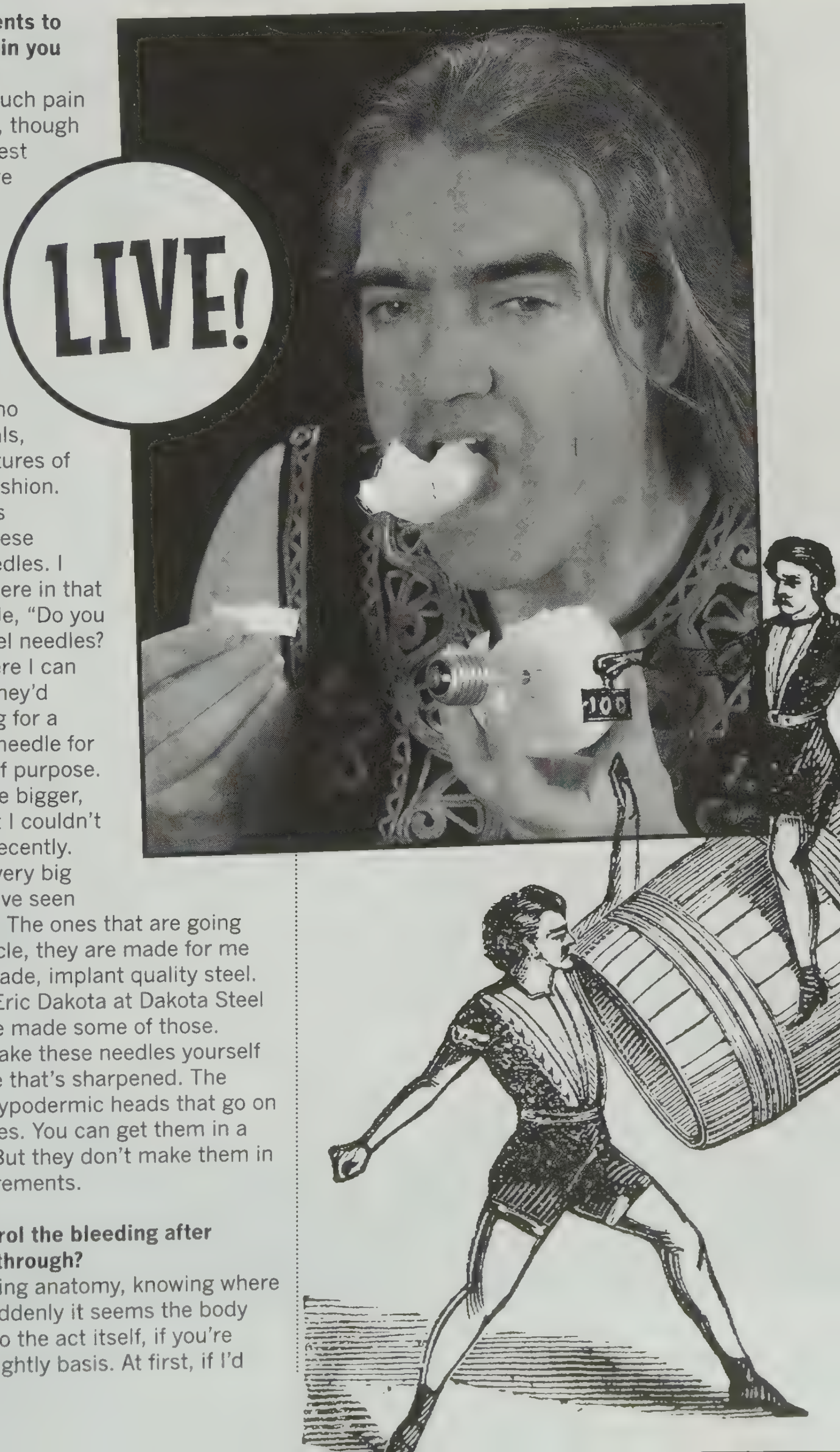
This page: Timm Grimm aka Zamora, the Torture King, poster art by Ashleigh Talbot.
Next page: Timm eats lightbulbs. Photo Richard Faverty.

sorts of experiments to see how much pain you could withstand?
Not to see how much pain I could withstand, though I had a little interest in that. I was more interested in the way it looked. I thought it looked pretty cool. I got a few pamphlets, most of them published in the 20s for people who worked in carnivals, and they had pictures of the Human Pincushion.

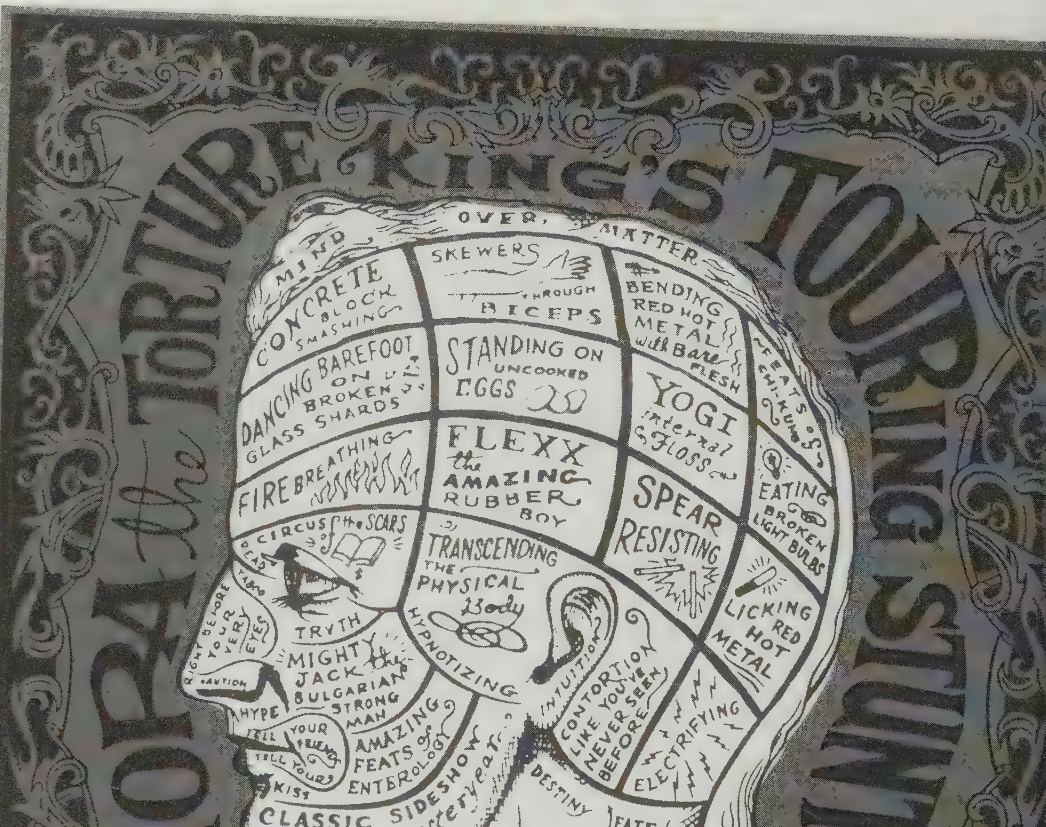
The pamphlets recommended these surgical steel needles. I had a problem there in that I would ask people, "Do you have surgical steel needles? Do you know where I can get them?" And they'd think I was asking for a different type of needle for a different type of purpose.

I wanted to use bigger, safer needles but I couldn't find them, until recently. I've gotten very, very big ones, now, if you've seen the photographs. The ones that are going through the muscle, they are made for me out of surgical-grade, implant quality steel. Made for me by Eric Dakota at Dakota Steel in Santa Cruz. He made some of those.

You have to make these needles yourself with surgical wire that's sharpened. The smaller are the hypodermic heads that go on the end of syringes. You can get them in a variety of sizes. But they don't make them in very long measurements.



How do you control the bleeding after putting needles through?
Part of it is knowing anatomy, knowing where not to hit. But suddenly it seems the body begins to adapt to the act itself, if you're doing this on a nightly basis. At first, if I'd


ZAMORA the TORTURE KING'S TOURING STUNT SHOW
MIND OVER, MATTER
CONCRETE BLOCK SMASHING
SKEWERS THROUGH BICEPS
BENDING RED HOT METAL with Bare FLESH
FEATS of CHI-KUNG
DANCING BAREFOOT ON BROKEN GLASS SHARDS
STANDING ON UNCOOKED EGGS
YOGI internal FLOSS
FIRE BREATHING
FLEXX the AMAZING RUBBER BOY
SPEAR RESISTING
EATING BROKEN LIGHT BULBS
CIRCUS of the SCARS
DEAD
TABOO
TRANSCENDING THE PHYSICAL Body
LICKING RED HOT METAL
RIGHT BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES
TRVTH
MIGHTY JACK the BULGARIAN STRONG MAN
HYPNOTIZING
INTUITION
CONTORTION LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE
ELECTRIFYING
CAUTION
HYPE
TELL YOUR FRIENDS
TELL YOURS
KISS
AMAZING FEATS of ENTEROLOGY
CLASSIC SIDESHOW feats of yesteryear
DESTINY
FATE
FORBIDDEN SECRETS
TITILLATION BY THE UNNATURAL
PARANORMAL PHENOMENA
CULINARY ODDITIES
IMPULSION
RELIGION
CHARITY
HOPE
FAITH
OOZING DANGER
BODY MODIFICATION
DIGNITY
MILLENNIUM

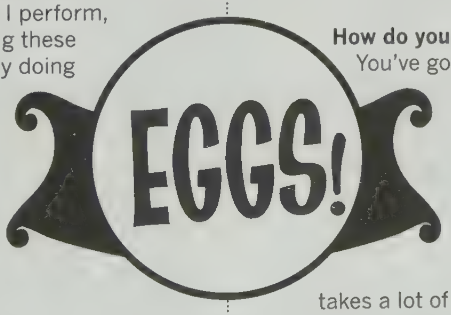
Art by Ashleigh Talbot.

lay off it for even a couple of weeks and then go back to it, I'd have more bleeding than I normally would. But then, after a few days, the bleeding will decrease. If it's going good, it will not be much at all.

There have been nights when, for no apparent reason, I will bleed profusely. I think it has something to do with the body itself adapting to it. It's certainly a factor. The whole act, it's like a body/mind thing, mixing the two, controlling the body with the mind, and the mind with the body. So you get a feedback loop going there. Sometimes there could be something else going on, and it's just not going to work. Maybe just the biorhythms are wrong or something.

Do you watch yourself in the mirror, then? Since you get off on the aesthetic quality of seeing this occur.

Surprisingly, I didn't see it for a long time until I finally saw it on video tape. I had used a mirror when practicing. It's a bit of a paradox, I know, but if I'm doing the act, I can't really be watching it at the same time. That's part of the reason I perform, I want to see people doing these things and there's nobody doing them. I am running to do it and doing it, and then I can't really see it.



Is it solely for the visual pleasure? Is there any sort of a physical pleasure that you receive?

Doing it very much makes you have a different awareness of your body and what it's made out of. All of the things, even the sword swallowing, just due to the fact that you're walking around in your body for so long, and there are these sensations you haven't felt yet. So when I'm putting a needle through my bicep, I'm feeling it pass through all these things that are tugging in there, these muscle groups and such. It's just an interesting thing. You've got your body and then this mysterious area inside, and these sensations that can happen that you're not normally coming in contact with.

From swallowing the sword, you're much more in control over the parts of the body you're not normally aware of. But now, if I were to say to myself "open your throat up", and I were to try to do that before swallowing a sword, just to see if I can open my throat up, my throat wouldn't respond at all. Yet I can actually think about what it will feel like and it will respond.

So you were taking the sword, opening your mouth, and just seeing what would happen as you put it in?

I had a technique of learning there; the body had to get used to these things. It's not going to be overnight. But now that my body's becoming used to it, or somewhat used to that sensation, there's a better awareness of the inside of the throat, and therefore control, because I'm more aware now of the different parts of the body and what they feel like.

What are some of the other acts you perform? The needles through the bicep, swallowing swords?

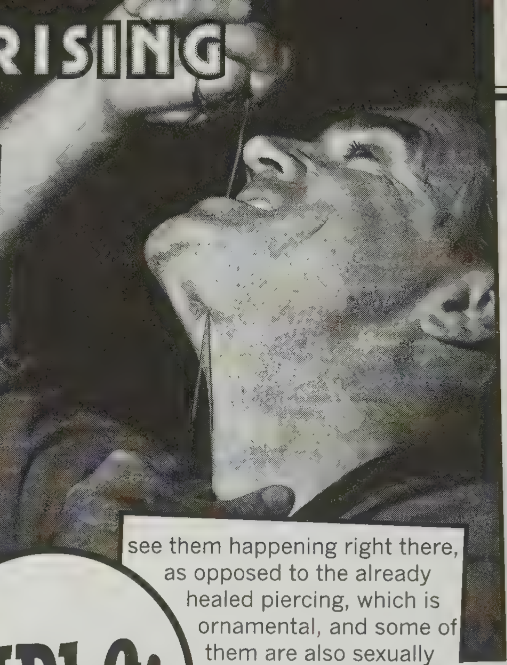
I stand on eggs without breaking them.

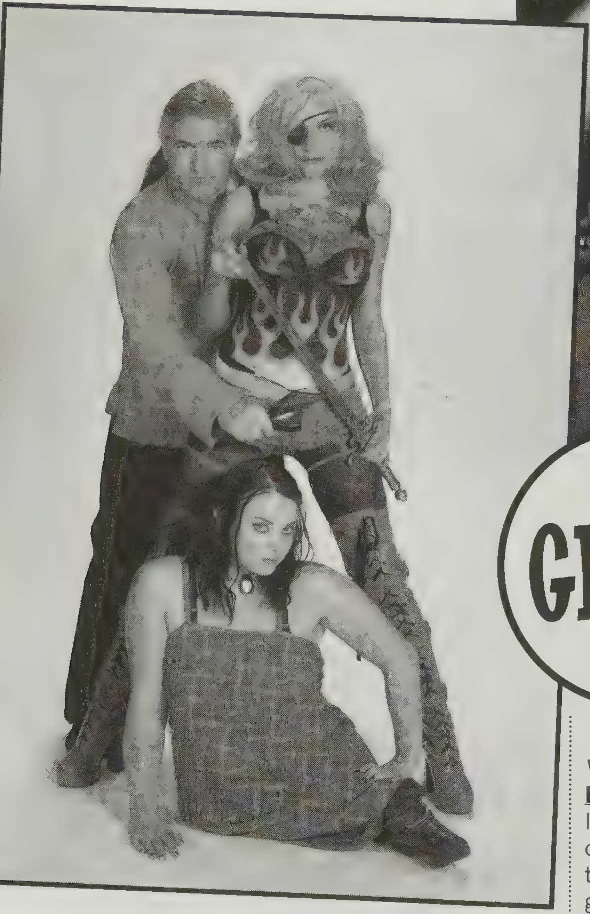
How do you accomplish that?

You've got to be very careful. One step. That's the kind of thing I do that's a very strange thing. Instead of doing something dangerous, first you have to do something dangerous in a different sense. Something that takes a lot of gentleness, as opposed to—a lot of the things I do seem very violent. But it takes precision to pull them off without injury. And that's something I have to be aware of.

What are some of the other things I do? I do martial arts stuff. I'm getting staffs broken on me, clubs broken on my back, with no discomfort on my part. Having sword blades pressed against me, and then I have somebody beat on the sword, the blunt side of the sword, with a club. That doesn't break my flesh, but it puts a big indentation on my skin.

These are things that, if I do them right, then I'm fine, though it's certainly not pain-free or anything. But if I do them wrong,





GIRLS!

I could get seriously hurt. So far I haven't been seriously hurt with anything, but there's always that potential.

Are you also involved in body modification at all?
For a long, long time, all the piercings I did were temporary piercings, and I didn't have anything aside from a pierced ear. I didn't have any permanent jewelry, like a lot of other people didn't at that point. Then the modern primitive thing happened, and now lots of people are going and getting everything pierced and putting rings in them.

But just recently I pierced a nipple, and I did get a Prince Albert piercing, just to see what that's like and the benefits of it. But it's not the primary focus of my act. The things I do are more about exhibition; you want to see them happening right there, as opposed to the already healed piercing, which is ornamental, and some of them are also sexually enhancing.

And that's the benefit of a Prince Albert?
That's what I would think you'd do with one. It makes sex a little more interesting.

When did you start publishing Off the Deep End?
I publish that sporadically. I've been collecting all kinds of weird information through the mail. I figured that the way to get more of the strange information I like is to assemble it and trade it with other people doing these types of magazines.

There were a few out there at the time. So I just put together things I knew and did a little work at the photocopy shop, and got what was the first print-out. Since then, information just started flowing and it became a much bigger project than I had anticipated.

What were your original ideas with it? What sort of things were you investigating with the magazine?
It was the very fringes of fringe thought. I called it Off the Deep End because I wanted it to be a magazine about the type of thought for people who were already in fringe thought, but would think it's pretty wacky,

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This page: Photos Richard Faverty and [left] Marshall Foster. Next page: Photo Jack Plasky.

and don't want to be associated with these 'other' people.

So it was like the weirder UFO stuff. I had Hollow Earth things in there. I had this really, really nutty conspiracy theory stuff. The lunatic fringe. I just wanted to see the limits of people's belief systems, how far they can stretch.

I think that I'd probably offend some of the people that I had in the magazine by putting them next to somebody else. They were thrown in with all these other kooks and their ideas. But usually people were just happy to get their work shown, no matter what format.

FREAK!

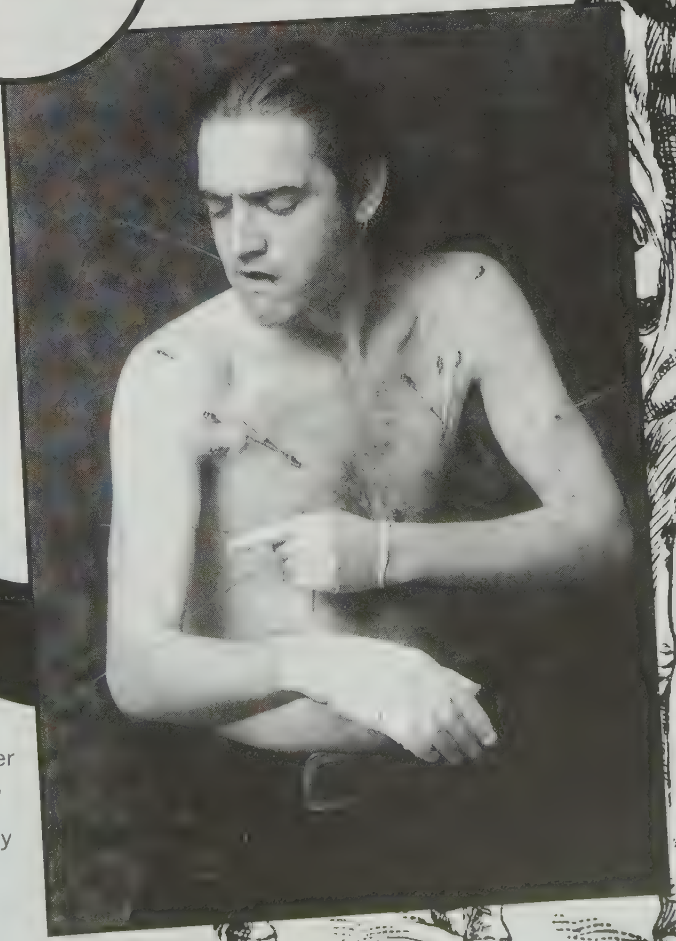
How did you become interested in Aleister Crowley?
Aleister Crowley is somebody I heard about from different sources. Certainly reading Cosmic Trigger by Robert Anton Wilson fueled that interest. I wouldn't say I have a very strong interest in Aleister Crowley, though I've certainly kept up on the research in the past decade or so. That's not the main focus of my life, but I'm certainly aware of that.

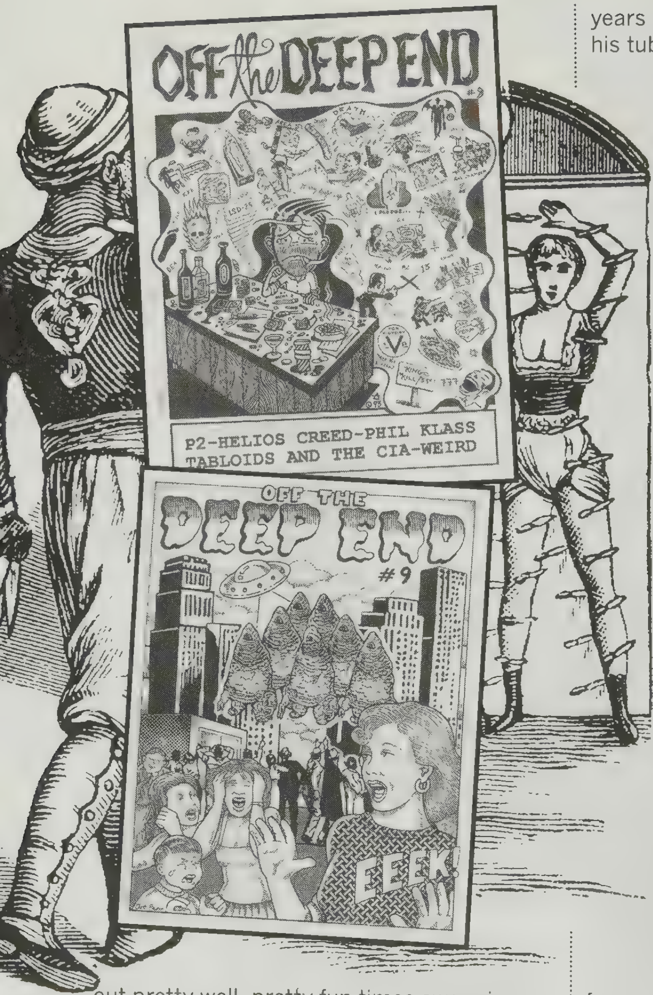
Have you ever been involved in any Ordo Templi Orientis groups?
I would be called a welcome guest of the OTO, in the chapter here in Seattle. I'm not a member per se, but I'm a welcome guest, which is an honorably bestowed degree. It means I'm not officially a member, but they'll let me come to their lower-level rituals and such.

Were you involved in any sort of projects when you were living at Incubator in Seattle?
I don't know if I actually did something when I lived there. I did a couple of fanzine conventions. I did one at the Incubator when it was over on—

12th and Main.
Yeah, 12th and Main. Then there were a couple of times that I just had all the people who dealt fanzines in the area. I got the list from Factsheet Five and mailed out postcards saying I wanted to get together. So I did send some flyers out for that, and made it basically a free thing.

Those usually worked out. I had a couple of those, and that worked





out pretty well, pretty fun times swapping magazines, and actually meeting the people behind the fanzines, which can be a strange thing.

How did you meet Matt Crowley?
I met him through a friend of ours, Sarondae Wolf. She met him somehow, I'm not sure. She came with him to the Squid Row, a bar in Seattle, way back when. I'd been handing out all these anti-voting flyers I'd made. And he got into a conversation with me over some of the illustrations in the flyer.

That was odd, because Matt Crowley ends up being The Tube in the Jim Rose Circus Sideshow. But I'd known him for a couple of years before that, without even knowing of his tube ability thing.

He had a friend of his who was a nurse, who had given him one of these stomach feeding tube kits as a joke. And he'd taken it home and practiced and practiced, just for, I guess, his own amusement. But it turned out when that sideshow was getting together, he showed up. See, that's the stuff that I never thought would be a sideshow stunt, would be an entertaining thing. I thought it was kind of interesting, but I didn't know if people would be amused by it enough.

But, actually, at a show I did for the Church of the SubGenius clan shop here, I had him do that to kill time in some act that I was doing, where he was basically the intermission. I just had him do that, because it was a medically oriented skit that I was doing.

That was the first public display of his act. And then he did it at the second Jim Rose Sideshow, when it had people other than Jim Rose, like at Café Sophie here in Seattle. But when I first met him I had no idea of his nasal abilities.

Were you planning on using any of your acquired skills for entertainment purposes then, before meeting Jim Rose?
Yeah, I'd done a number of different things on different occasions. Opening for some rock bands in town. I did a show with Henry Rollins once when he was doing a poetry reading; I did some fire-eating. But I never had a long enough format.

As well as, I'm not the best onstage by myself, especially at that point. So when Jim came around, he'd met a bunch of people that didn't have a full act, and got them together. And he was very good at being the emcee, and that's how that all got together.

How did you meet Jim Rose?
Jim Rose had put some flyers up around town. He was doing this solo act, and a mutual friend of ours who'd met Jim Rose knew I was into that type of performance,

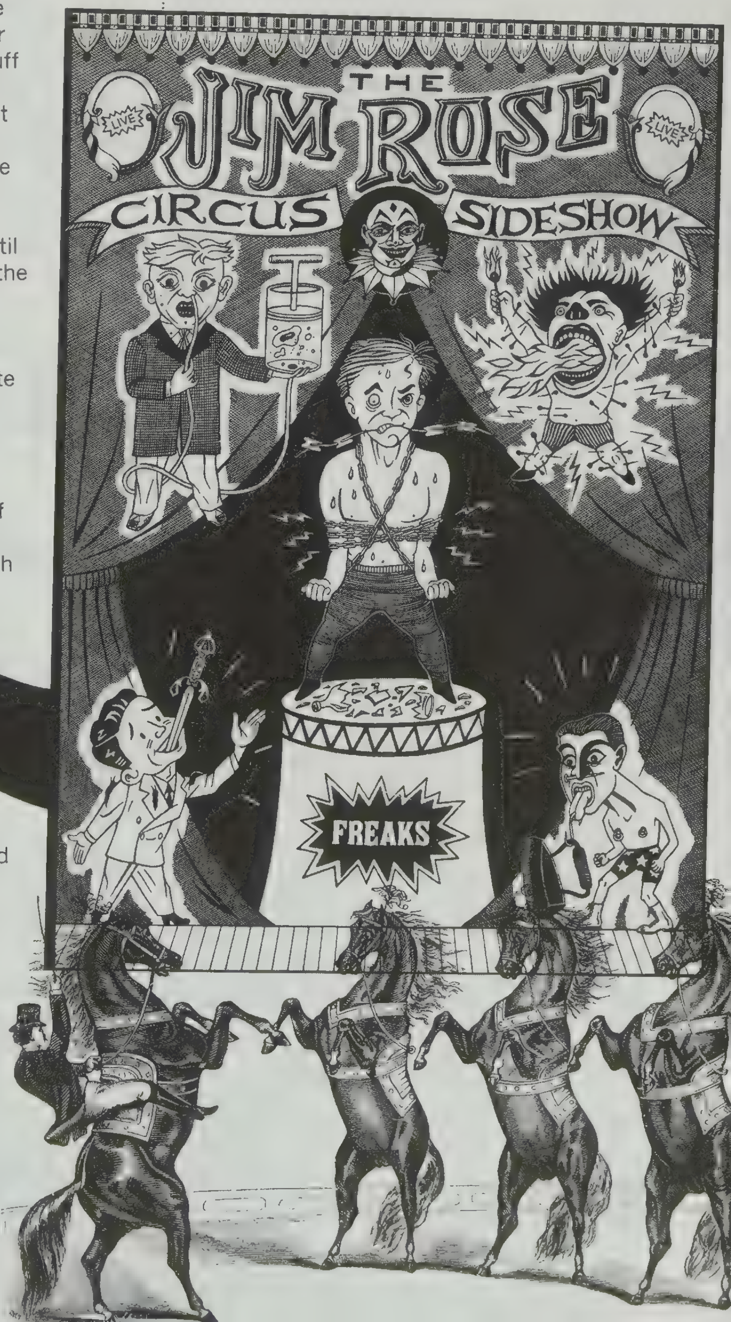
Next page: Jim Rose Circus Sideshow poster art by Ashleigh Talbot.

and asked me if I'd seen those flyers. And I said, "Well, I saw the flyers, but I haven't seen the show." But then he called up Jim Rose and put him on the phone with me, and I went and saw a show and talked about sideshow stuff.

At that point, he's asking me all the things that I had done or could do, and a lot of it was stuff that Jim was already doing or doing versions of. But he hadn't seen the Human Pincushion at all during that point. He had me named the Human Pincushion. That was my thing for a while, just the Human Pincushion, until I could bring other things into the act.

A big thing I did was the electricity act, where I had a friend of mine, Dale, who's quite the electrical genius, build a Tesla coil. I pinned little light bulbs on my chest. I actually did this opening for a Mark Pauline lecture at the Center of Contemporary Arts in Seattle. I stood in a bucket of water with a hundred pins pinned to my chest. Each one of them had these neon signal lights in them, and I'd touch the coil as it was being charged and light up all the lights in my chest, as well as lighting up fluorescent and neon that was in my mouth. People tell me it was quite the impressive sight.

How do you prepare for the shows—for the Jim Rose shows, or for the shows you do now? Do you even have to do any sort of preparation? You mean mentally? I've done it so often I can switch on once I'm on stage, switch on very quickly. It's become like a habit, so that I don't need a lot of preparation time to get in that state of mind.



How did the show get picked up for Lollapalooza?
Now, a lot of times, I'm way out of the loop as far as business decisions go. I got progressively further away as the show got more popular. I got further away from what was going on upstairs. It just kind of turned into a job after a while.

Incidentally, word was out that Perry Farrell, who was behind a lot of Lollapalooza, wanted to turn it into more of a circus-style feel, just for the second one they had. They'd already done that, trying to give it a more circus feel, and were looking for circus-style acts. I believe videotapes were sent to the people behind Lollapalooza, and they saw and liked them, and eventually came and saw the show in Seattle, and picked us up.

That was a major turning point in the whole sideshow. It got us a lot of publicity. That's when a lot of people heard about us and knew about us. How do I say this? I think some people got egos out of the deal. We'd done a tour of Canada and some small touring on the West Coast, but that was the thing that got us into the national spotlight and all over the press. So Lollapalooza would always include a photograph of somebody from the show. Always something in the written-up part.

Did any of you have control over the identities that you had? Did you choose the title The Amazing Human Pincushion, and the wardrobe that you wore during the show?
I was called at the very beginning the Human Pincushion, which I thought was very limiting and an awkward name. Eventually I did get the name Torture King, which I'm more known by. By the time we were in Lollapalooza, that was my title, which was an old sideshow title. It's usually for somebody doing what would be called a torture act. It's more like a yogic act than what they call torture acts in the sideshows.

You can still find a postcard that's fairly common, of a guy pounding nails up his nose. It's titled 'The Torture King', and there's a banner postcard you can find with

Zamora eats fire at the Hellazapoppin Sideshow Revue. Photo Shade Rupe. Next page: Photos Marshall Foster.

that title as well. It's certainly not an original name, but a traditional sideshow title.

But it's a better description of the full range of things I do, that they're not just putting pins in me, even though that is what I'm most famous for. Especially now with the degree of piercing, it's a lot more common than seeing the bicep piercing.

When did you adopt the name Timm Grimm? Timm Grimm was an old punk rock name, shall we say. Mine, actually. I used to go up to eastern Washington, not far away from the Idaho border, where they had a radio station at the university. That was my radio name, my punk rock name, and was very descriptive of my personality, people felt. It fit me well.

You're exploiting this ability you have, but then being an exploited part of the Jim Rose Show. What were your thoughts about exploitation itself—did those change during the show?

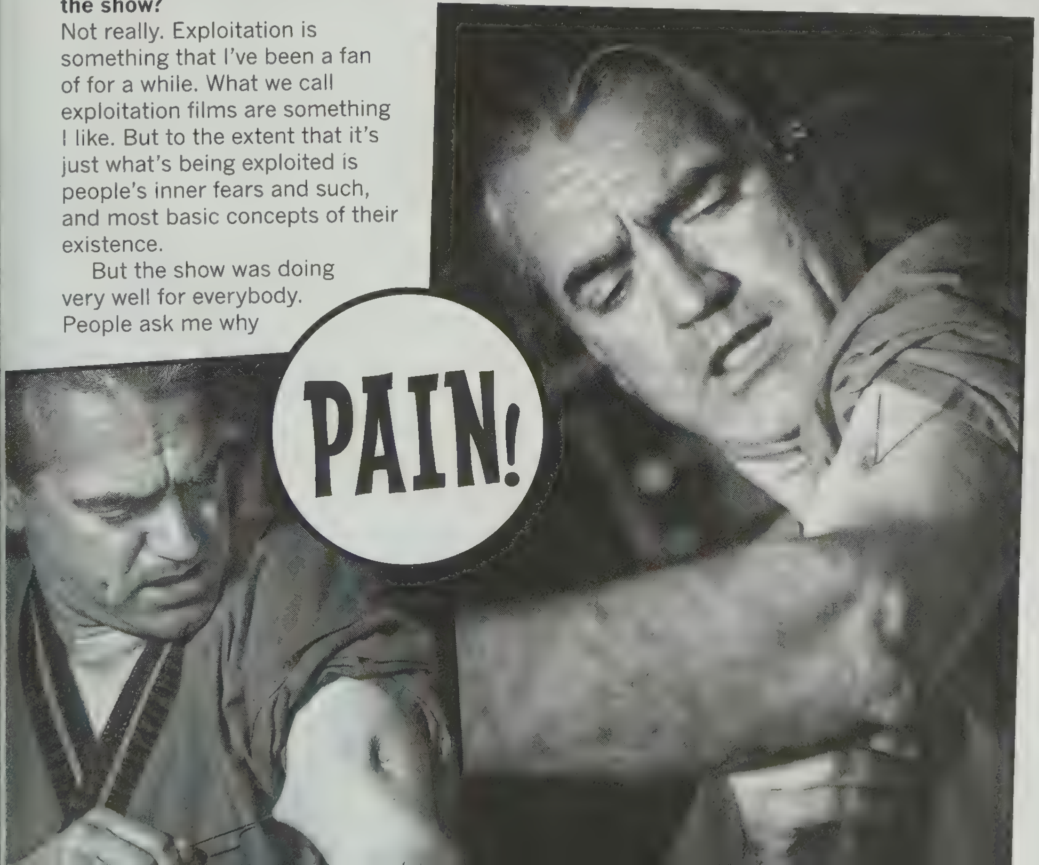
Not really. Exploitation is something that I've been a fan of for a while. What we call exploitation films are something I like. But to the extent that it's just what's being exploited is people's inner fears and such, and most basic concepts of their existence.

But the show was doing very well for everybody. People ask me why

I'm out of it now. Basically I got as much as I could out of it, to the extent where Jim was getting as much as he could out of me. There was a point where it went the other way. I was better off out of the show for myself. And I just jumped off at that point.

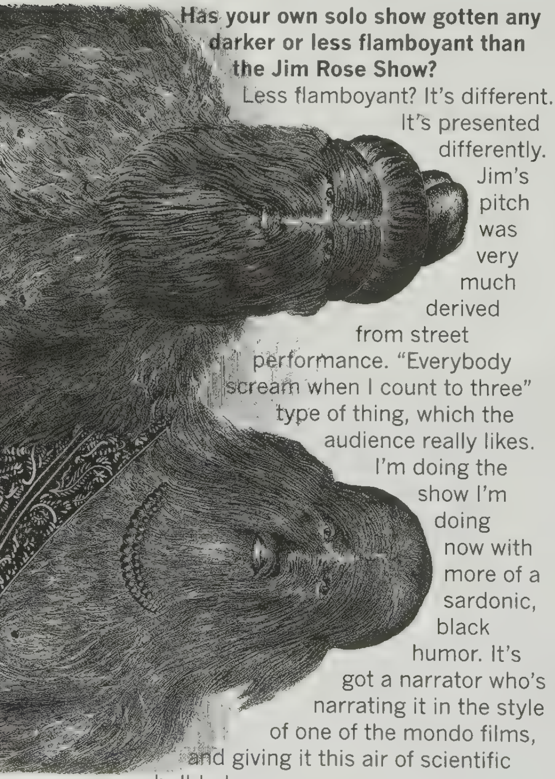
There was certainly a point where I was way, way better off being with the show. But it just got to a point where I wanted to do my own—there was a point where Jim wanted to make the show a little less extreme. Like with the Human Pincushion, he didn't want me to do that at all anymore. And here my idea was, I wanted to do deeper piercings, the muscle piercings, things like that. So there was a kind of a conflict of vision in that sense.

I just got off, and I've been doing my own thing. And I don't know if Jim likes that or not. I suspect not. They've done a new edition without me, but I haven't seen it in a while and haven't been in contact with anyone in the show for a little while. But their



show is still going and doing well, I hear. So I really don't know what's going on, though I know they're opening for Nine Inch Nails.

Is Joe, the Amazing Lifto, still in it?
Yeah, with Bill and the Enigma still in it. And they've got some people doing, I think, contortion and some juggling, with chainsaws.



Has your own solo show gotten any darker or less flamboyant than the Jim Rose Show?
Less flamboyant? It's different. It's presented differently. Jim's pitch was very much derived from street performance. "Everybody scream when I count to three" type of thing, which the audience really likes. I'm doing the show I'm doing now with more of a sardonic, black humor. It's got a narrator who's narrating it in the style of one of the mondo films, and giving it this air of scientific bulldada.

But the stuff I'm doing is pretty extreme. It's presented differently, but it's gone over very well. I did a show with Genesis P-Orridge and Charles Gatewood in Seattle, and it went over very well, as well as in the San Francisco area recently. Good reaction to that.

The narrator is Dr. Ray van Starck, who is doing a very good job of oration. Somebody I've known for quite a while. He was involved in some Church of the SubGenius activities before, when he was the head of the Campus Crusade for Bob at the University of Washington.

Has Matt 'the Tube' Crowley considered touring with you at all?
Matt Crowley is working as a pharmacist again. When I first met him, he was a pharmacist; now he's back. I think he did the show, went on tour, because he hadn't traveled very much, and it was a break from his routine.

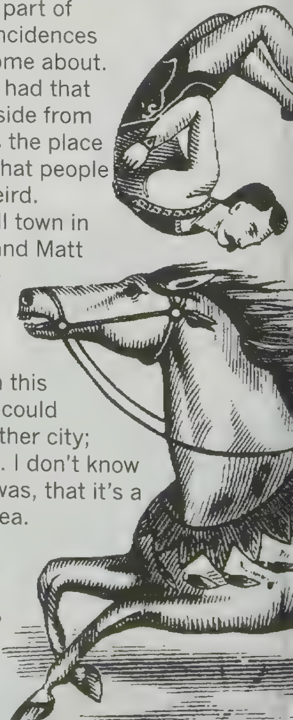
I've actually asked him. I didn't come out and say, "I've got this happening, if you want to do this." I asked him, "If somebody asked you to do a show in town, do you think you might just do a short thing?" And he seemed to be very much against it, that he didn't want to, which I thought was kind of odd.

In fact, I think he was asked to do this thing for this Heresy show with Genesis P-Orridge and didn't want to. I guess he got all his performance out of him for the time being. He's not interested in that right now. Though I would certainly like to have him present the act again, because people really dug it. It was a fun part of the show. I'm sorry that it's no longer being presented.

Do you think that living in Seattle has contributed to your lifestyle at all?
It's made me all gloomy and depressed, because it rains a lot. No, I don't think so. I don't think that was a part of it. A lot of strange coincidences caused the show to come about. I don't know if Seattle had that much to do with it—aside from the fact that Seattle is the place and the general area that people go to if you're at all weird.

I came from a small town in eastern Washington, and Matt came from the middle of Montana. Usually people gravitate to Seattle. It's this type of Bohemian mecca in this area of the country. It could have happened in another city; it happened in Seattle. I don't know how big a factor that was, that it's a major metropolitan area.

What are some of the more interesting jobs you've held out there?



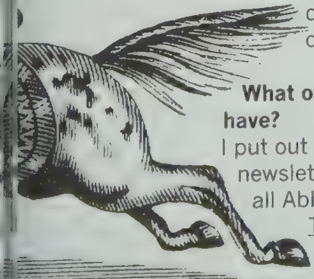
ZAMORA, THE TORTURE KING

REAL!

As some people know, I've worked for a long time at the Apple Theater, a porno movie theater here in town. It's actually a rarity, because it's showing 35mm porno films on the big screen.

There aren't many theaters in the U.S. that do that anymore, because the videotape market has pretty much done away with all that. Very few porno movies are made on film. They're all on video, and people take them home, and they don't need to come out to a theater.

But it's one of the few in the country, and when I'm not touring, I usually will fill in for people having a vacation or out sick or whatever. I'm on call and come and run the projector. Do all the dirty work. It can get dirty, at times.



What other interests do you have?
I put out another small newsletter recently, which is all Abby Hoffman's Steal This Book type of tricks. How to get things out of vending machines and get free postage and free photocopies, things like that. Little tricks people use to get around the system.

And actually, that caused quite a little bit of controversy. It got on the front page of the two local papers, as well as a longer article in a weekly paper in Seattle. Because I'd given away what's called the 'clipped penny' technique of getting free parking, which involves taking a penny and filing it down to where Lincoln has a flat-top. That's how I usually tell people how to do it.

You clip off a part so you give Lincoln a flat-top, so it's no longer a circular shape, it's clipped at the top. And then that's inserted into the dime slot and turned, and it'll give you an hour and twenty minutes, strangely enough.

The revelation of this caused some city officials to claim they've been able to fix the meters, so that it doesn't work anymore. But

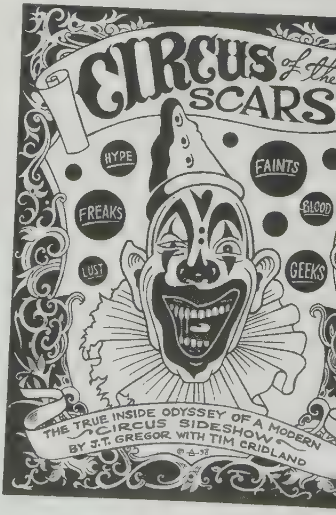

CIRCUS of the SCARS
HYPE
FAINTS
FREAKS
BLOOD
LUST
GEEKS
THE TRUE INSIDE ODYSSEY OF A MODERN CIRCUS SIDESHOW
BY J.T. GREGOR WITH TIM CRIDLAND

Photo: Kevin Stathan. Art by Ashleigh Talbot.

I think they're just bluffing. But it made the front pages, so it was pretty funny.

You've also expressed some interest in trepanning.

Trepanning. Yeah, I've been exploring research in some rather extreme body modification, and that was one that I looked into. And this is something that I thought was an extreme one. It was in this book Eccentric Lives and Peculiar Notions by John Michell.

He had a chapter on these people in England in the early 70s who had drilled holes in their skulls, this being to get a permanent high. This is a very primitive thing to do, trepanning, drilling a hole in the skull. It's been found in all these old skulls, thousands of years old.

I was asking modern primitive types if they'd ever heard of it. Do you know about these people? And a lot of them were quite shocked that somebody would do this, and thought they would die.

Eventually I tracked down the number of a lady who'd done this. And while I was in England, I got to meet her and did an interview with her. I haven't published it yet, but I think it will be in the next Off the Deep End.

Her name was Amanda Fielding, and she actually had done a film of this. She'd done this to herself, and using an electric drill with a trepanning tool on the end, had made a film that was called Heartbeat in the Brain. She'd gone around to art museums showing this film, and lecturing, answering questions. Including one at PS1 in New York in the 70s.

I met her and she actually let me feel her hole. I could feel the hole she drilled in her skull. There wasn't very much on this for a long time, but I supplied some of the information that's in a book that will be published by Feral House called Kooks in a chapter on trepanning.

Apparently everybody who did it back then or who are openly talking about it are all alive and well and healthy and no problems whatsoever. I figure, hey, why not? I got the nose ring and the Prince Albert. What's next?

Trepanning.

A hole in the skull.

What else is in the future for the Torture King?

After leaving the Jim Rose show, I had a half-hour-long act that I was presenting in various cities. I wasn't really touring, I was kind of drifting and being a nomad for a while. Just visiting people in various cities, and while I was there, I'd present the show.

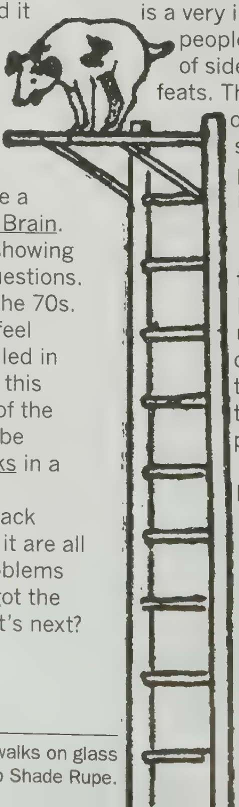
But I finally got together my hour-and-a-half-long show, which includes a lot of things that have never been seen before. And I didn't do them in the Jim Rose show. Certainly I was exploring them myself, because I've never seen them being done before, being from a generation that the sideshows skipped.

So I'm doing things with hot metal. I'm holding a red-hot piece of metal in my mouth and I'm licking it. I'm putting my fingers into molten lead, putting my hand in and pouring it across my hand.

I'm doing one where I swallow thread as well as some string, and then poke a hole from the outside into my stomach and pull the string out. This is a stunt that was in the book Step Right Up! by Dan Mannix, which is a very inspirational book to a lot of people who are into the resurrection of sideshow stuff, hicks, and fakir-style feats. That was something that took a lot of exploration to get it down into something that you'd be hard-pressed to see anywhere else but in my show.

I've done a little bit in California. I just pick a town there, see if it would work. And I'm going to be doing a show up in Seattle here in a couple of weeks. And I'm trying to get together a road crew to go on the road, and I'd like to see other parts of the country.

Part of the thing with the Jim Rose show was that it got too big, I felt. I feel that the show I'm doing is something that you have to have a level of intimacy with the audience. It's not an arena show. If you're too far back you're not going to be able to appreciate it; you have to really see the things I'm doing. That's



Main photo: Richard Faverty. Inset: Zamora walks on glass at the Hellzapoppin Sideshow Revue. Photo Shade Rupe.

what I'm trying to do, is get the show together. Also, the Jim Rose show ticket prices and all that got too expensive, I felt. I was cut off from the business end.

I just want people to know that I'm going to get a touring show together, and hope to see whatever part of the country they're in.

Also, especially if that film Heartbeat in the Brain is down in D.C., maybe you can even get a screening happening along with your show.

Well, when I talked to Amanda, I was actually trying to see if I could. I didn't ask directly, but I got the answer quite strongly that she didn't want the film out at this point. Basically I asked her if it was available on a video or something. I asked her about getting it released on video, but she was very strong that she did not want the film widely distributed without her knowing what context it was in.

She had apparently had negative reactions to the film before, and she felt the powers that be would crack down on trepanning, which she feels is the key to liberation. This is the thing that everybody should do. It was a great thing. But other people feel differently, and she's just trying to prevent it from being used in the wrong way.

Did she say that she does experience some sort of altered consciousness?
She goes way off, she goes on and on about it. The main point of why she did it was for the altered consciousness effect, she says. And she feels everybody would be better off if they would just drill a hole in their skull. She thinks the government should provide—

Black & Deckers for everyone?
No, just you and I can go to the doctor's office, and he'll drill a hole in your skull, and there you go. Just a hole in your skull. Seriously, she wants it to be for national health, that this thing should happen. That everybody should be able to have the option of getting a hole drilled in their skull.

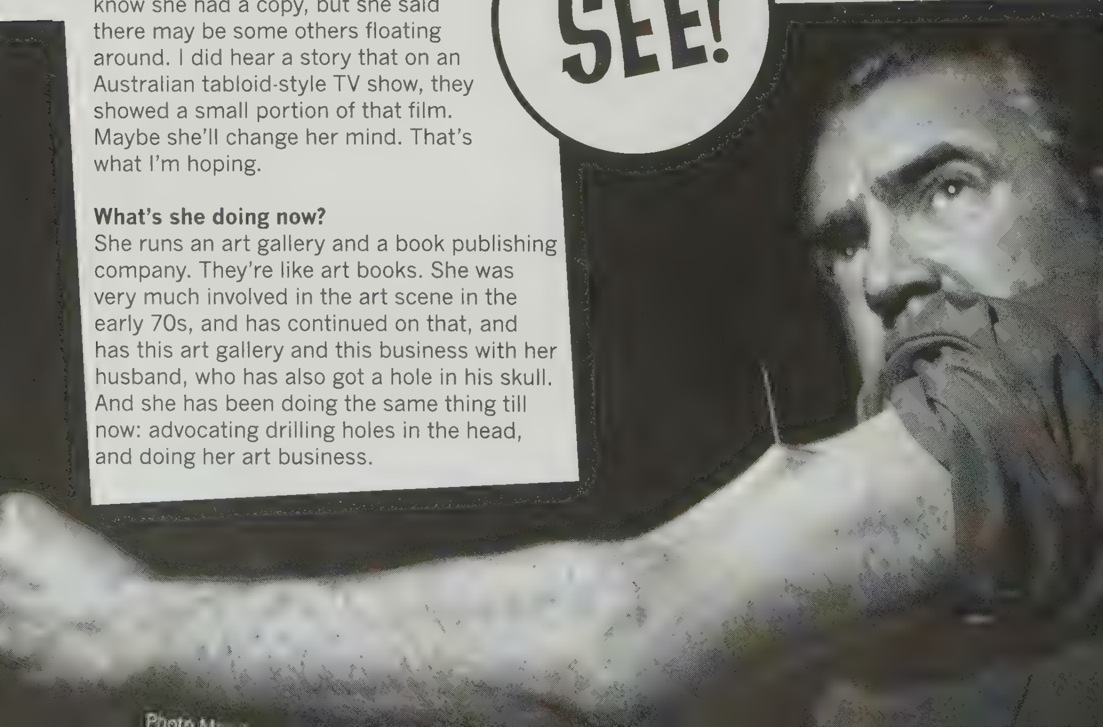
But, yes, I certainly would like to get that film and show it to people. Hoping there's one out there. Because I know she had a copy, but she said there may be some others floating around. I did hear a story that on an Australian tabloid-style TV show, they showed a small portion of that film. Maybe she'll change her mind. That's what I'm hoping.

What's she doing now?
She runs an art gallery and a book publishing company. They're like art books. She was very much involved in the art scene in the early 70s, and has continued on that, and has this art gallery and this business with her husband, who has also got a hole in his skull. And she has been doing the same thing till now: advocating drilling holes in the head, and doing her art business.

In this thing on trepanning that I have from Crank magazine, it actually says which length of drill is best and which brand.
The important part here is that you can use any drill, but the end is what's important. When she did it, she used a drill, but she had a special trepanning tool, which you can get from a medical supply house. They have these for brain surgery.

It wasn't just go to a hardware store and pick up any drill bit. You can really damage yourself that way. They have a tool that, it hits bone, but when it hits the membrane—it's important not to puncture the membrane.

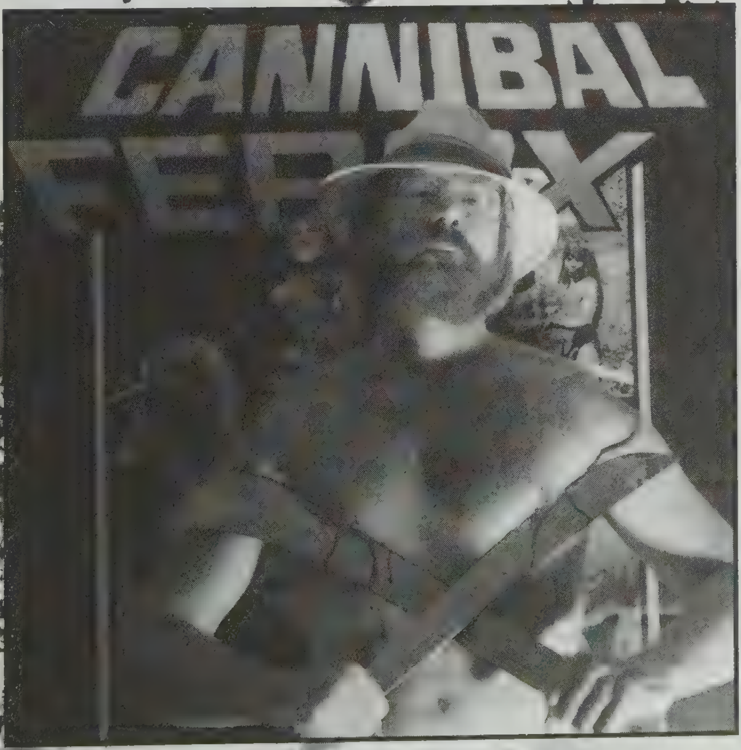
It's the skin and then the skull, and then there are about three layers of membranes between the skull and the brain, which are pretty thick and rubbery. But the important thing is, she never penetrated the membrane itself, just the skull. Injuring the membrane could really fuck you up with an infection or something like that. Which is apparently one reason she's not very keen on giving that information out.



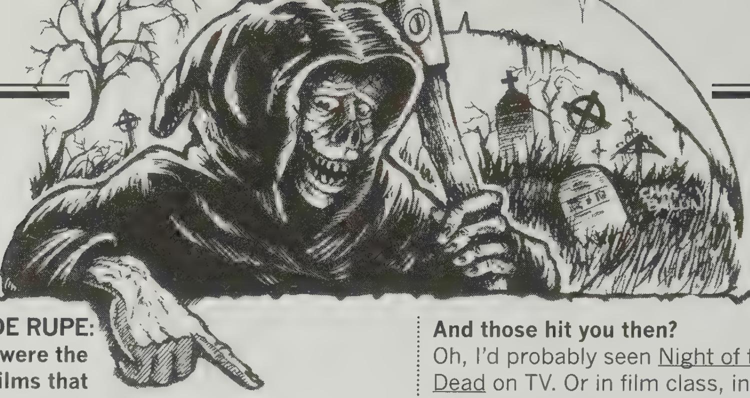
Photo

CHAS. BALUN FULFILLED THE ROLE of everyone's big brother horror fan. A punk rock attitude with a 70s rock soundtrack permeated Chas.' praising of early 80s American horror and 70s Italian cinema, probably gaining Lucio Fulci the bulk of his stateside fan base. Cobbling together the landmark fan magazine Deep Red, Chas. quickly staked out his own landlines in the maze of horror fandom, and well before internet bloggers populated the bloodwaves.

Through Deep Red's patronage, thousands of young horror fans' eyes were opened to the goriest and most dubbed films imaginable. Chas.' height and bulk and paternal tone made him the grand daddy of the horror convention scene. His full warm voice and large bear paws guided youngsters along the path to raw visceral imagery and real dark scares. Chas. was one of my strongest supporters and gave me early gracious regards for the Funeral Party books, and his booming yet soft voice fills my heart daily.



"They certainly can't be using me as a demographic variable in this."



SHADE RUPE: What were the first films that turned you on to horror?
CHAS. BALUN: All the early stuff, because I'm in my forties. I grew up with King Kong and Son of Kong and Godzilla. Caltiki the Immortal Monster and 20 Million Miles to Earth and 'son of' everything. Son of Dracula, Son of Frankenstein, Son of the Wolfman. I grew up on that kind of stuff, watching Godzilla, watching it eight times a week on Million Dollar Movie. And the same is true with King Kong, Son of Kong. All the Ray Harryhausen stuff.

I grew up on that, and some of my favorite films, like The Haunting, I used to watch over and over. That was a real effective thriller. I grew up when horror films had some merit and some degree of quality to them, where you could actually build a legend.

Because, gee, here's Boris Karloff, you know? Here's James Whale. Here's some dialog that will resonate throughout horror films for forty years. Here's a theme that will carry itself on for years and years. Here's something that has a sense of awe and mystery and the fantastic.

And it didn't have kids in it getting killed. This is way before that era. Here are adults in adult situations; they're trying to save the planet, not their asses. They're trying to save the world. The Day the Earth Stood Still—I mean, come on. That's some pretty heavy material there. They're worrying about nuclear disarmament and they're stopping all that. Now, there's a theme to chew on. Rather than, Hey, I'm going to get fucked, and then I'm going to get whacked apart with a machete.

Did you see Night of the Living Dead when it came out in theaters? Were you aware of it?
I probably saw that in a film class in college, with Texas Chain Saw Massacre.

And those hit you then?
Oh, I'd probably seen Night of the Living Dead on TV. Or in film class, in the theater, wherever it was, I saw it when it first came out, and thought it was something exceptional. It was very different, with that really downbeat ending. My favorite ending. Nobody gets out alive. The way horror films should end.

Then you were talking about stuff getting some merit, and then The Exorcist comes out: this big, big release, critically acclaimed and so on. But today something like that couldn't get released at all. It wouldn't even be X.
Precisely. That would never make it to an R-rating, and then they'd have to cut it.

And cut it even for video.
They wouldn't do it for NC-17. They'd cut that down. And who knows? That may be the last great masterpiece of horror ever. I don't care what they say about George Romero's Dark Half or that crap, or Clive Barker's movies.

There are very few masterpieces of horror being made.
And The Exorcist, I may not see another one in my lifetime. I'm prepared for that. I've gone retro in the last year. I'm buying

Tarantula, Earth Vs. The Spider, and Amazing Colossal Beast and shit like that. Watching Valley of Gwangi again.

I've been forced underground, too. It sucks. This stuff never plays. When I grew up, it's like it was Maniac. It was Videodrome, Motel Hell.
How old are you?

I'm twenty-five.
See, I'm old enough to be your old man, so you're in a real different generation. You grew up with different rock 'n' roll groups. I grew up with the Rolling Stones and the Beatles and the Doors.

I had the Sex Pistols, Dead Kennedys.
I've always felt that a generation that grew up without the Beatles or the Rolling Stones missed out on something. And the same is true with a generation that grows up on Friday the 13th Part IX, and the kind of crap that's out now—they never really got to get that chill.

You see Boris Karloff's hand moving for the first time in Frankenstein. "It's alive! It's alive!" Just the rush of that. And realizing that this isn't just some piece of crap that's just going to disappear after two weeks. This is going to resonate throughout the genre's history.

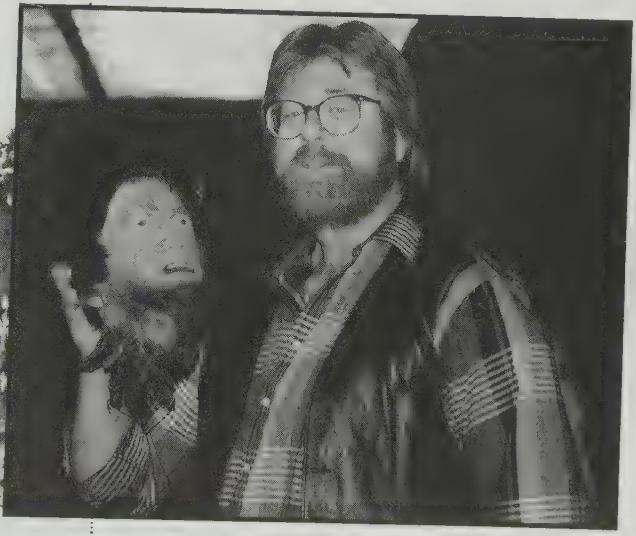
And people are going to be turned on to it generation after generation. And it'll still hold up. And they'll restore the print, and they'll add eight seconds. And you'll think, wow, I've got to get that, because I've got to see those eight seconds. I missed it the first fifty times.

In the last couple of years, have you talked to any of these people, to Romero or whoever?
Why is it necessary to talk to them? Because it's better to see how someone's actions speak for them. Because they tell you what you want to hear in the interviews. "Oh, you're from Fangoria. Oh, it's going to be really gory! You're going to see things you've never seen." Or, here's Time magazine: "This is a suspenseful action thriller with just a minimum amount of bloodshed." They know how to play the game. They know how to suck up to whoever they have to suck up to.

Are these date movies? Who are these audiences? I don't know any Friday the 13th fans or Freddy fans. I don't know those people. Who are they?

The Film Festival in Seattle, that's where Re-Animator played. That's where From Beyond played. Evil Dead, Evil Dead II. I got to see all this stuff in a theater, and it played. It was great, and I was just so excited, thinking, "Boy, I can't wait till I'm an adult and start doing some of this stuff."
Little did we know that it was the glory days of gore in the 80s, in the early 80s.

Even when Deep Red came out, it was at the end of it almost.
True.



It was coming out, this kickin' mag, just great stills, just promoting it, and promoting the good stuff. Not just grabbing some film and saying it's great. That's one of the problems with bootleg review zines.
Because they're selling it.

Miscellaneous artwork in this chapter by Chas. Balun.
Photo this page: Chas. Balun and friend. All images unless noted courtesy Chas. Balun.

Have you ever wanted to do movie stuff yourself? As far as film-making. Have you gone ahead and made any films yourself?
No. I have no desire to be a filmmaker. I don't mind being a film writer. The experience I had writing the Chunk Blower script was cool enough. And then when I did Ninth and Hell Street, the novel, I figured that would be a great movie.

But as far as me getting directly involved, I don't think that could ever happen. I was going to do something with Gunnar Hansen one time. We were collaborating on this thing called Butcher's Pride. I had a lawyer friend who was going to dump some money into it.

I found out early on, moviemaking is a team effort, and I am everything but a team player. I'm one of those people who, on their early report cards in second or third grade, had "Does not work or play well with others" written in ink.

I would be intolerable to work with. It would just be impossible. My standards of how I'd want something are pretty well defined. And to put up with something less than that isn't going to work. So people would just really hate my guts right away.

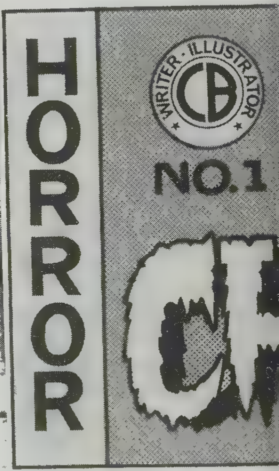
I learned early on that you cannot deny the nature of the beast, and the nature of the beast is, it's a collaborative venture. That you cannot own your own equipment; you've got to rent it. You've got to beg, borrow it. You have to depend on people with money. And the people that are going to give you money are not going to just say, "Here, Chas., here's $45,000. Just make the most horrific film you can think of."

It's not like that in life. They give you their forty-five grand or their 145 grand, and then you've got to listen to their suggestions. Because it's not just no strings attached. It's business. It's called show business. They want that money back, and they want to show a profit.

Unless you're going to go out and just drum it up yourself.
Yeah, then you do what you want. But how many people can do that effectively? How many people just get ground up in the machinery?

The Gunnar Hansen thing was the thing you mentioned in Deep Red years ago?
Yeah. It didn't work out, and I started finding out it was the business people. It was the investors, the lawyers, the dentists that are chipping in—they're the ones that are making the films. And even if there's somebody who's a horror fan involved in it, it's not his vision; it's a collaborative thing of the business end and the art end of it.

And the bottom line is, it always had to be compromised. I realized that for me it's easier and better for me to work on projects where I am the sole source material. That it's my total vision. Even if it's small, it's a little book, it's an article or whatever. It's full-strength me, at least. It's 100% without me butt-kissing anybody or putting in something I didn't want to put in in order to assuage some other interested group.



Did you have anything to do with the writing of the Chunk Blower trailer at all, or was that totally based on Zweig's script at the time?
That was mostly based on that original script. I'd written a couple of revisions of that script. Right from the beginning it was pretty hopeless, and I told him it was. I wrote the voice-over stuff. You can tell it's all my hyperboles strung together: "Crossing the double yellow line head-on into your worst blood-soaked nightmares." That's vintage me, man. Blasted out with the stuff you see on old movie posters. All those lies, you know?

"The most terrifying shocks ever presented on film." So I wrote the voice-over stuff on that. And I looked at their storyboards and wrote that, and the other stuff. I did this quick little airbrush poster for it that they included in the press kits. And they showed that at the Fango Weekend, and all this shit.

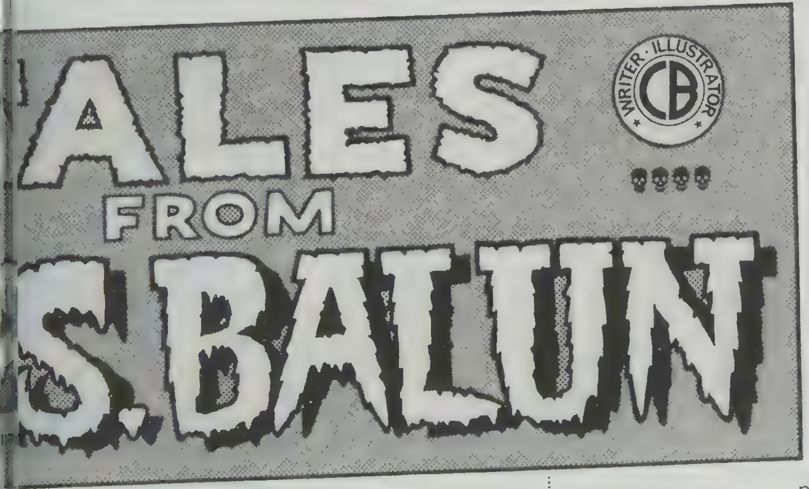
And it was cool enough that was made. But still, it's some psycho in a tow truck. Who gives a shit? So I convinced him to do a totally new script, a totally new thing, a new idea, a new concept. So that's what I'm happy with.

Your Chunk Blower script is almost like an American Guinea Pig, in a way. It's got your evisceration.
Did you read it?

I've read it twice.
That's the one that the doctor is in.

Yeah, the talk show.
Oh, so what did you think?

PICK-IN-THE-PACK
CHAS



I really liked it. I thought it was great, because you're slamming a bunch of people. Like the talk show lady.
I tried to make it be valid.

Did you see the Manson special they did recently? Watching those women, and the way they talk, and how—
I was ahead of my time there.

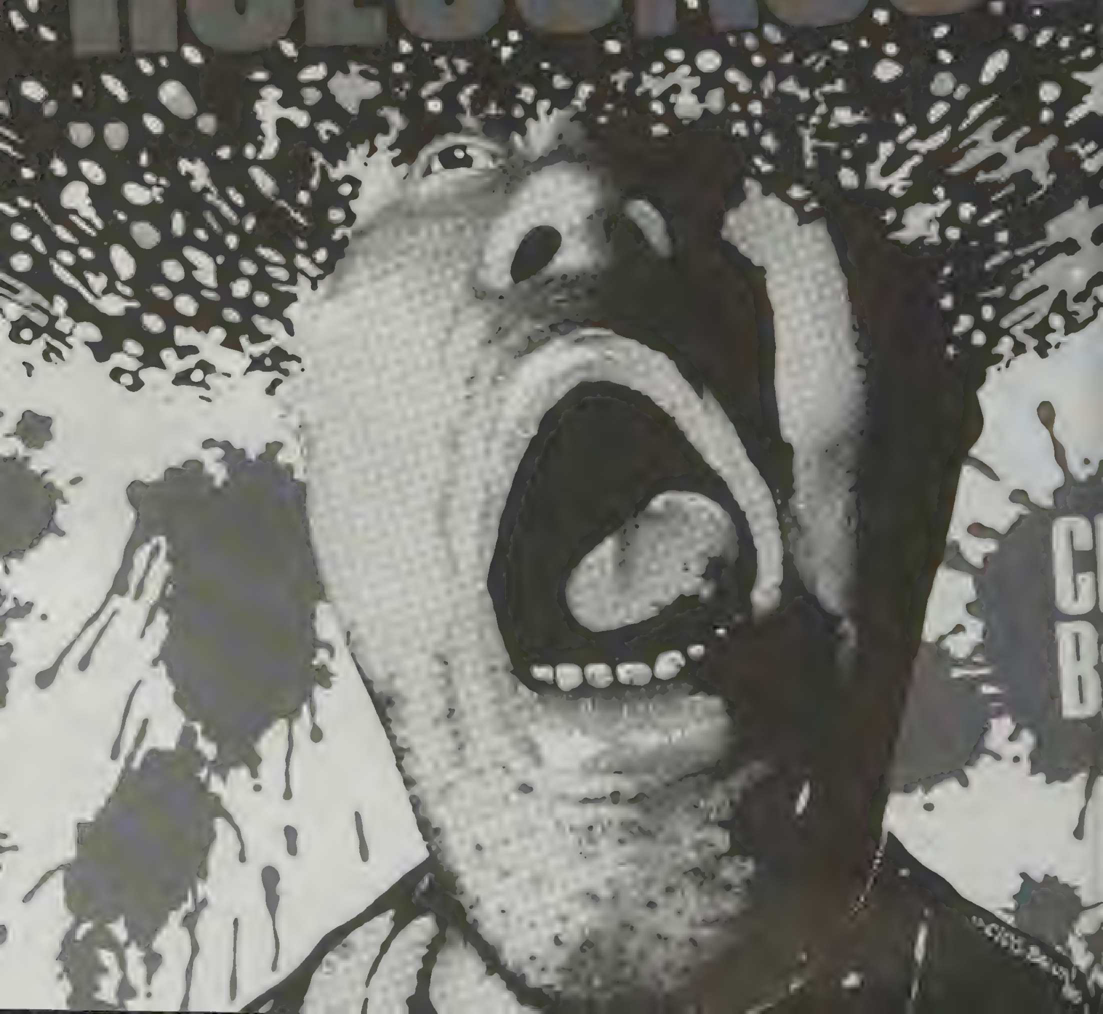
It's just watching these people totally judge, and the way they listen to the people and talk to them from their little cushy homes, and their little cushy white, blonde, blue-eyed lives. Ed Sanders wrote that book, The Family.
Oh, yeah.

That's great, because he was part of the culture. And he was horrified himself that members of his own culture did this. That makes sense. But to have someone from this totally white-type community that they were against in the first place put 'em in a chair, you're not going to get anything, you're not going to learn anything. All you're going to do is point the finger. Just point the finger. And the nice thing about your Chunk Blower script is the finger gets pointed back, and it gets taken off, too.
Tell me what you thought of the ending. I was especially proud of the ending, because I set it up where it would continue, where everyone was wrong in what they thought about this person or her motives or anything. And you realize that the full cycle of abuse and deceit and murder and child perversion would continue for another generation.

It could be done for $100,000 and look good. Look at Henry.
Well, I cut the ride with that in mind, thinking that there's not going to be a big budget, so I'd better not have big crowd scenes. I can't have a 747 crashing into a tower. So I wrote it with that in mind, that it could be filmed cheaply, but it wouldn't have to be a stupid script.

It wouldn't be like, "Oh, here are four or five teenagers in their jeep and their car breaks down, and here's this weird house

HORROR HOLOCAUST



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up on the hill." I tried to put a little mental stimulation into it and not have you be able to figure it out in the first five minutes, which you usually can with every other horror film.

I don't know what's going on with the film. Maybe I'll have to read this thing all the way through to find out exactly what's going on and what his point is. Maybe something will be revealed at different points that will set a whole new spin on it.

Has Gary Blair Smith gotten anywhere with that at all, as far as getting that done? Because he spent twenty grand over two days for the trailer.
Why didn't he just shoot the fucking movie? Like I said, it's a collaborative deal. I realized that I had no part in that business, sitting in a hotel room off the Sunset Strip after one of the Fango weekends with Gary and Jim VanBebber, going over the script, and realizing I was the odd man out, thinking it's real important that we keep this undiluted and full-strength.

You have to shoot it on Super-8 or 16mm, so what? Who gives a shit? Get the vision across. If we have something to say, it's gonna come through, because VanBebber's got talent, obvious talent. He could shoot something on video and it's still going to say he's got talent.

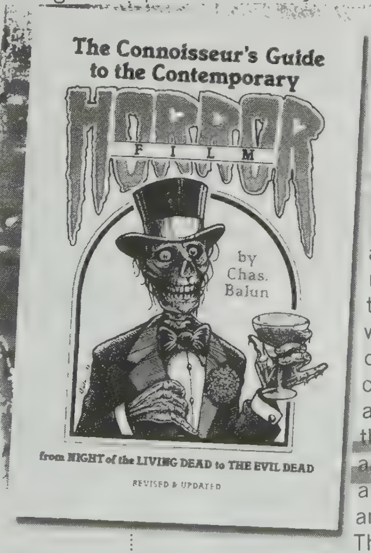
And I had enough talent in the writing end, and people would be curious enough to see what we could come up with. But they were dead set against doing it on anything less than 35mm and for anything less than, say, $850,000. I just laughed.

Okay, so I guess what you're saying is it's better never to do this film than to do it cheaply. And it'll always just be something in our head that we thought we could've done.

But how many of our favorite movies are done that way? With the big jumbo budgets?
That's the problem. You cannot convince other people of that. It can be a play, or a theatrical release. There are so many egos to go through in doing a project like that. You find out early on that you'd better be a team player, and I'm just not. I'd rather just say, "Oh, you don't want to do it exactly like I want to do? Well, then fuck it. I'll just go paint a picture, then." It's all mine, I didn't ask anybody for permission, I've got all the supplies.

And gee, you know, Vermeer and Leonardo DaVinci and all the famous painters in the Louvre, there're paintings that have spoken to people for centuries and centuries and centuries, and some guy did it in his fucking kitchen, and his wife gave it away. Like Vermeer, the great Dutch realist, gave it away to settle the bakery bill, because he had eight kids. Here's one of the greatest paintings ever done in the history of mankind. One that will outlive the artist by centuries and centuries. This guy did it by himself in his room.

I like that power. Writers have the same power when they do a book. It's not by committee. And when I saw my Hendrix laserdisc from the whole concert at Woodstock I realized, here's this one person who can be so riveting, and just electrify people for decades, and it's him. The reason you appreciate that is because whatever was coming out of his guitar, was coming out of his heart and his soul, directly through that Marshall amp into your ears, and into your brain and into your heart. That communication was beautiful, that it could be so direct and undiluted and pure.


The Connoisseur's Guide to the Contemporary
HORROR
FILM
by Chas. Balun
from NIGHT of the LIVING DEAD to THE EVIL DEAD
REVISED & UPDATED

So Gary was more interested in "Oh, we need a star. We need this, or we need that", Or it was just the big budget part?
Yeah, budget. Just making it big—come on, the movie's called Chunk Blower.

You're not going to sell it, especially today. Maybe early 80s, maybe late 70s, but especially not today. Chunk Blower's going to be loved by fans of the genre. Someone who goes and sees Lorenzo's Oil isn't going to go, "Oh, Chunk Blower. Let's see this. Bring the kids." It's not going to happen.
People are going to have to seek it out. They're going to hear about a film called Chunk Blower. Distributors aren't going to take it; it's not going to play.

See, you know that, I know that. Doesn't everybody know that? No. Not the people that make the films, no. They don't.

You haven't made friends with any producers down there that are interested in trying to raise a small amount of money and go ahead and do that?
Hell, no. Are you kidding? It's a closed shop. It's a good ol' boys club. You would think, of all the people that I've known in the business, that I've partied with, that I went to the Dylan Dog Horror Fest with, that I've written set reports for, that I've been over to their house and gone to their screenings. I've done all that shit. You would think, somewhere along the line, after all the crappy films that everybody's seen, that one of them would say: "Yeah, Chas. He's a writer. He's got some opinions. I wonder if he could write some kind of a script thing?"

You would think just by process of deductive reasoning, after they've gone through everybody else in Hollywood, and the friends of friends of friends of the guy who cleans their pool who has a script, that somewhere along the line they would put it together and say, "Yeah, why don't we give Chas. a chance?"

It's not like I've never brought it up or anything. But I'm not in the good ol' boys club. I've got my own opinions about stuff and I'm not afraid to let people know about them.

New York's different. There are more people who are really into just doing stuff. They like to get together and do stuff. It doesn't have to make a million dollars. I think it's a West Coast thing, but they talk and they talk and they talk, and it rarely materializes.
And now they have fax machines, they can talk and fax.

Sometimes it's not even horror. Mike Kuchar asked me to be in his next film. That's not horror. It won't have a big audience. It's

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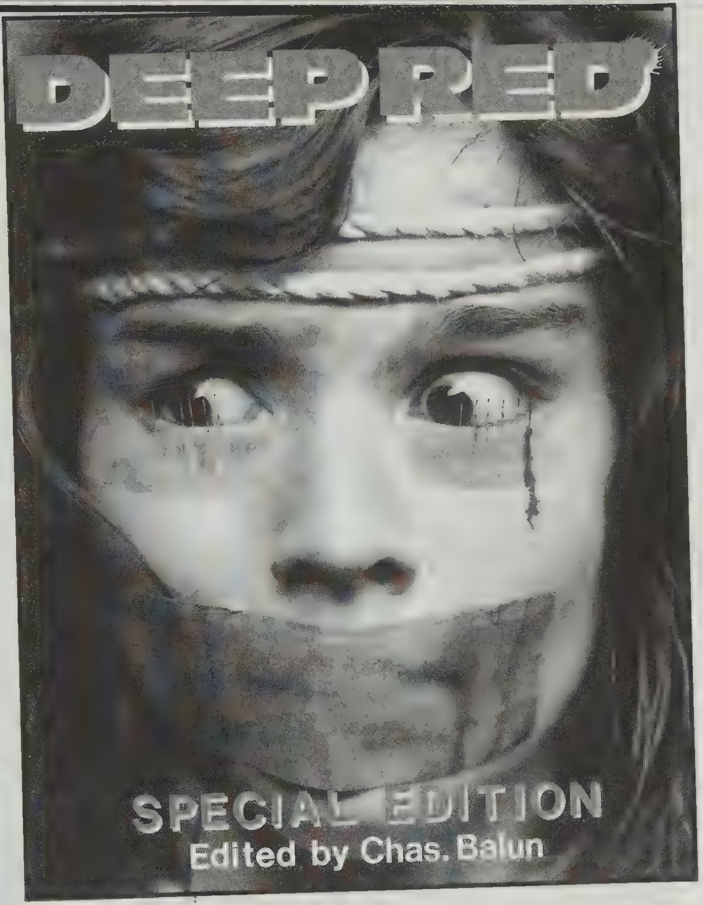
DEEP RED
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Edited by Chas. Balun

on video. But it's just doing it. And that's different. It's better. Same philosophy they had with the books I did that were self-published.

You were able to get FantaCo involved, though. Didn't they handle all the financing for Deep Red? Yeah, for all of them except for the first issue, which is actually Issue Zero, because that was number one. The 600-copies-only one that no one sees. But, yeah, they did the books.

Chunkblow Press, is that totally self-financed on your part? Yeah. When I do things for Chunkblow Press, that's mine. That's my thing. And I'm looking for another publisher. I've been talking to those guys at Sounds of Death magazine. They're very interested in doing a Bloody Best of Deep Red with new stuff, and the best of the old stuff, and stuff from Deep Red Alert 1 and 2, which kind of sold out, and nobody ever really saw it, because they had such limited print runs.

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They've got great shit. I've been impressed with what they've done with their magazine and their print runs and the advertisers they get. So I'm quite interested in that. FantaCo, I can't figure it out. I guess they figure horror is dead.

But they still put out their Horror Yearbook. I thought I had a good relationship with them, going back to 1983 or 1984 with that Connoisseur's Guide.

I've worn my 'Deep Red Delivers' shirt to a couple of the midnight screenings, and people say, "Wow! Where'd you get that shirt?" And I say, "Oh, you can get it from FantaCo." And they say, "Man, that guy's so great! Deep Red's fucking great."

Like those Deep Red coffee mugs. Some of my designs have been appropriated at various times, made into other things that kind of left me out in the cold. That's show biz. But I'm glad it has a good reputation. That's why I've always wanted to do a farewell issue. That's what I proposed to International Media Incorporated, whatever the publishers of Sounds of Death is, that I want to do a farewell one-shot deal.

Because it was a good idea, I was proud of it, but I wanted to bury it properly, and not just have it die in a ditch somewhere without anybody knowing about it, or how it really ended up.

In GoreZone, everyone's like, "You need more pieces like Chas. Balun's 'Piece O'Mind.' You could put out a 'Piece O'Mind' book." That's what everyone was commenting on.
Tony [Timpone], I guess, just ignores that, because he's made it look like I just quit Fangoria or GoreZone, but that was never the case.

He wrote a nice note about you in one of the editorials, though. He's like, "It's really sad to see Chas. Balun leave."
Right, but I only said I needed a couple of months' break from all of the stuff. I needed to finish the script, finish this novel, and then I'll do 'Piece O'Mind'. I just needed like a two- or three-month sabbatical.

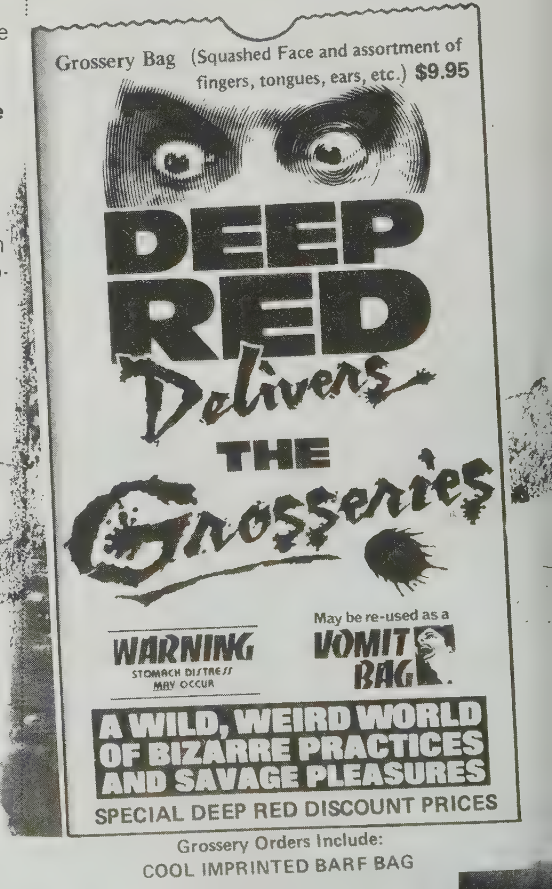
And so after I had that, I mentioned probably at least a half a dozen times or more, "Okay, Tony, I've had my rest. I'm ready to do it again. I've got a different viewpoint; I've got a different attitude." "Oh, no, we don't have room in GoreZone for your articles anymore."

Oh, so it was their decision, actually.
He'd rather send me on a set visit to Demonic Toys IV. I hold Tony culpable in this situation. I don't know what he tells people, but "How come Chas. doesn't do GoreZone?" "Why is David Schow doing 'Piece O'Mind' lite?"

Like who gives a shit about horror pinball games? Part of what made GoreZone interesting was Tim's point of view, my point of view, Steve Bissette and these other people had a personality and a viewpoint. I think Tony's just kind of like a politically correct yes-man. He knows what to kiss and when to kiss it.

You've been doing this stuff for forty-four years or whatever. Have you seen other declines in the horror film? Or has it always just been kind of this sub-genre, or whatever, this sub-area of movie theaters, and then it kind of grew and got bigger and then plopped?
You read Bled to Death?

Right. You're talking about the fifteen-year, seventeen-year cycle?
Yeah, usually it's never less than ten or greater than fifteen to seventeen years. But you just apply that logic, and you really see how it works, and the way horror is set up do to all those sequels. Sequels are nothing new. They've done those in the 30s and stuff,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to milk it and milk it and milk it and milk it until it was dead.

But who is going to these things? Who are these people?
People who are laughing at the end of Psycho instead of being scared. We're all the same. If you grew up and saw Frankenstein, you wouldn't go see Son of Frankenstein, or House of Frankenstein. We all have these favorites.

There are certain films that it's good that they did make more than one. Because a lot of times the best in the series came further down the line. But it's not just a rule of thumb that every single film should have a sequel made of it, which seems to be the thing now.

All that shit that Charles Band does. I can't imagine sitting through any of that, but there are a number of, what, Trancers IV and V? They're on Puppet Master V.

It's amazing. Who is renting those?
I feel totally estranged from the horror crowd, because when I sit and watch these, they certainly can't be using me as a demographic variable in this. This certainly couldn't have been made for someone like me.

It seems just so fan-directed. They're not even trying to make a good movie that people can go to and experience that chill. They assume this is what fans like, and they'll give the fans what they want. And we'll give the fans little creatures to love and buy toys of.
Now Jeff Burr's doing films for them, and I saw Jeff. "Oh, you're going to hate me. I'm working for Charles Band." Like I said, this is the kind of business where it's hard to get work. And why should Jeff Burr sit on his hands waiting for Eddie Presley to get pushed out into the world, when there's work that's being offered by somebody who at least says: Here's the script, here's the money. You get to use this and that and it's a good-paying gig.

As wonderful as it is to be so dogmatic about people's approach that they're not selling out, they're not compromising themselves, well, what do you expect these fucking people to live on? If they're directors and they're filmmakers, they've got to make movies. I can't fault anybody, really, for falling into that trap. It's easy enough and seductive enough. And sometimes necessary enough that you've got to do that kind of material.

You said in Deep Red, "Fans become superfans." They become this and that, and nothing can destroy this. And really, it's all independence. If anything's going to happen, it's not going to come from Hollywood. It just dilutes it, and it fucks up people's minds.
But, you know, Shade, there's a sad little footnote to that that I've seen over the course of all this time, and looking back on things I said, things I hoped, and things that I figured the sheer force of enthusiasm and devotion and fanaticism could be brought to be.

Look at the generation of the super-fans that have become filmmakers, and they make Violent Shit I and II. They make Redneck Ozone Mutants. They make some real crap. And I feel partially responsible, because it seems like I've just cut loose legions of people with blood sprayers and gallons of stage blood that have no idea what a good story or script would be, but if it gets a ten on the Gore Score, then we've done something right.

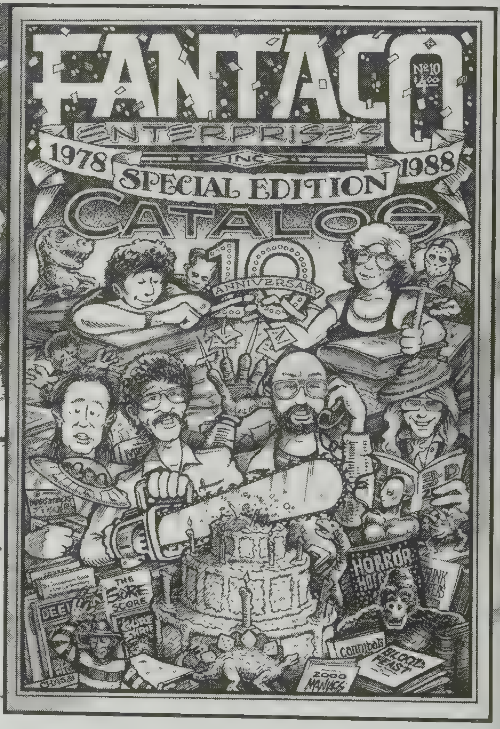
You just watch it with embarrassment. Here's what the super-fans have become. Idiot savants or something.

I thought about that, actually, watching Guinea Pig. There's really not a story, there's really no acting.
It's porno. It's gornography.

When I read Ninth and Hell Street, that word just—maybe I read it somewhere, maybe someone else said it, but when I read that book, it was just like reading porno, but it was gore. It was so great, my mind was a writhing mass of bloody worms; it was excellent.
Oh, thank you. I'm happy that you read that. I think I've made my statement clear about what it could be, without criticizing everybody else, without having anything to offer. This isn't just Critters V or some piece of crap.

Ninth and Hell Street is a real short novel, but I don't think people who are into horror and gore would be disappointed at all that I don't have twenty-five-page character development in it, and you don't know what school this guy went to or what kind of car he drives, or any of this other shit. I just cut to the chase.

Have you written other scripts? Have you written other films that you can see being made?
I did a short story for Butcher's Pride that Gunnar actually did a script from, and I did the Chunk Blower mutations, and Ninth and Hell Street.



So there is a script out for Ninth and Hell Street?
No, just the novel.

Plasma released it on their schedule of upcoming releases. They did a big ad: Upcoming, Chunk Blower, Ninth and Hell Street.
See, Jeff Burr's brother was over here one night. They were thinking about buying the film rights. I was kind of flattered by it. But that was back in the old days when I figured: this is part of the process. People come over,

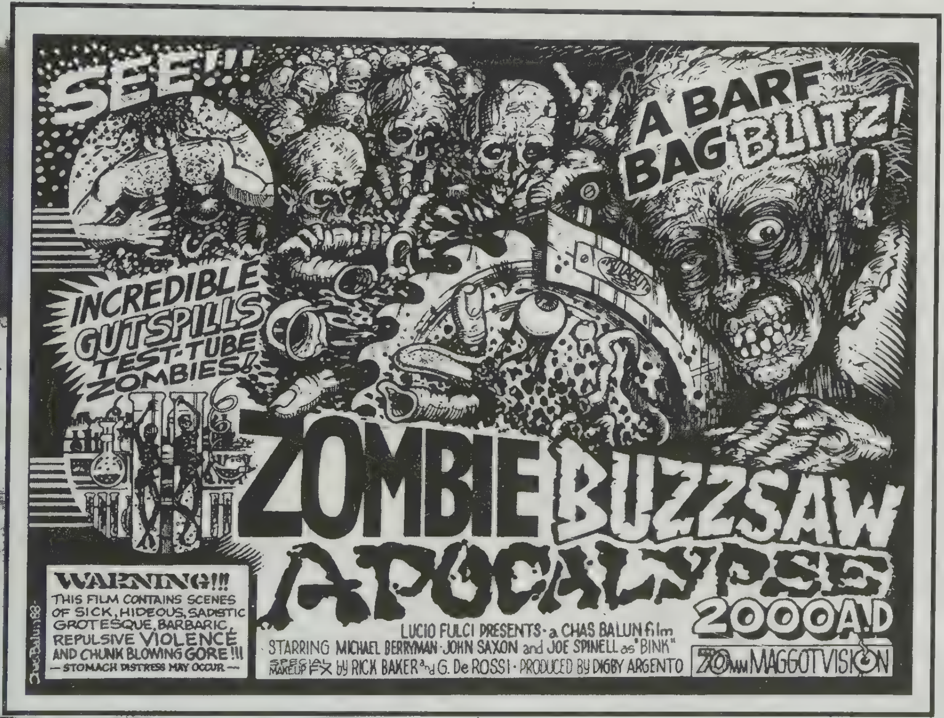
they smoke your stash, they drink your beer, they jerk your chain for three or four hours, but they don't bring their checkbooks.

"Oh, we've got to go back and talk to our money man in Arizona, and then we've got to do this. And then we're going to this convention in Ohio. I've got to talk to this accountant there." And I go, "Yeah, right."

For someone who's into gore and extreme violence, you've mentioned that reality violence totally turns you off. What's that about? What is it about the real stuff that turns you off so much?

Because there's no distancing mechanism there, and there's no dramatic context of that. It's just in your face. You don't know what came before; you don't know what came after or anything about it. It's just human beings as meat, basically. To me, there's just something obscene about viewing that as entertainment or as a geek show.

The man promoting Guinea Pig.


SEE!!
A BARF BAG BLITZ!
INCREDIBLE GUTSPILLS TEST-TUBE ZOMBIES!
ZOMBIE BUZZSAW APOCALYPSE 2000 A.D
WARNING!!! THIS FILM CONTAINS SCENES OF SICK, HIDEOUS, SADISTIC GROTESQUE, BARBARIC, REPULSIVE VIOLENCE AND CHUNK BLOWING GORE!!!
— STOMACH DISTRESS MAY OCCUR —
LUCIO FULCI PRESENTS · a CHAS BALUN film
STARRING MICHAEL BERRYMAN · JOHN SAXON and JOE SPINELL as "BINK"
SPECIAL MAKEUP FX by RICK BAKER and G. De ROSSI · PRODUCED BY DIGBY ARGENTO
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Chas Balun 88

Not promoting it, revealing it for what it is, truthfully. To me there's just something borderline obscene about the whole situation of wallowing in somebody else's misfortune. I cannot distance myself from seeing a real human being with his head blown off or run over or stabbed to death or dynamite detonated in his mouth. He has a father and a mother and a sister, and maybe he had a dog or maybe he had dreams, maybe he had all of this stuff. I can't get into the entertainment mode knowing those kinds of things. In movies, no matter how gross and violent it is, I can, because after they yell "cut," the guy gets up again, and they do another take of it and they wipe the blood off and they squirt it again.

There's a dramatic catharsis that goes on there. Again, it is in the theatrical context. Here's a plot, here's a story with a character, here's this dramatic arc, here's the resolution, he's killed, he's whatever else it is. But it's a story and it's designed as entertainment.

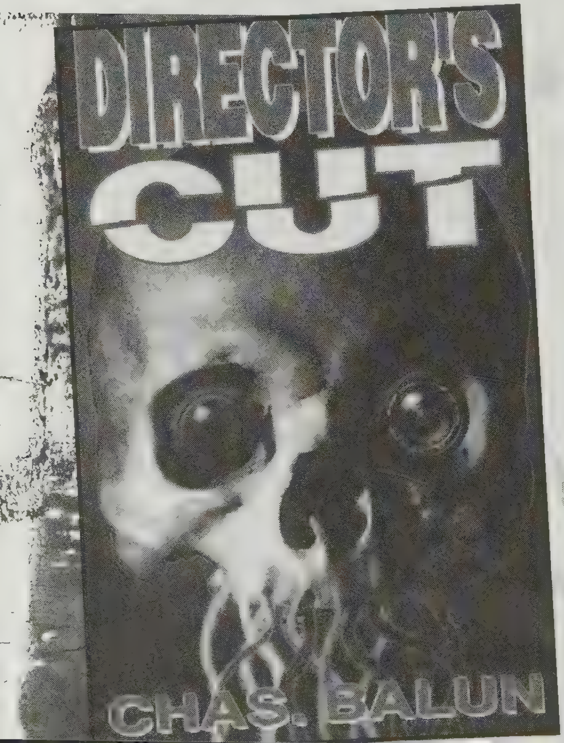
The other stuff is I don't know what. It's like gornography again. Here's your cum shot! We're gonna do brain surgery on this seven-year-old!

These people have True Gore, all this stuff. I never trade or buy or sell any of that kind of true geek stuff or the true mondo stuff, because I find it really disturbing. I'm still profoundly shaken by seeing that R. Budd Dwyer suicide tape.

I've only showed it to a couple of other people. I've only seen it like twice. It just makes me think about stuff for days and days after that. When the camera closes in and the blood is just pouring out of his nose and mouth like a spigot turned on full blast, something more happens in that, because you're seeing a transition from life to death. You're seeing something leave this body.

It's palpable there. And that camera comes in close enough where all of a sudden things are changing and it's a very unsettling, disturbing experience, something I don't want to be repeating again and again.

Especially when the guy comes out and he says, "Please, just stop! Please turn your cameras off!" And they keep rolling.



It's like, do I want to be a part of that? There are two sides of the fence in the line on that. One side is how I feel about it, and the other side is, you're the cameraman, and not only are you not going to turn off your camera, but you're gonna do a close-up and freeze on it, and you're going to take that film out and give it to other people, let them sell it or distribute it or do whatever else it is.

Maybe the guy was an imperfect individual, a human being. He, who is without sin, cast the first stone. But to not treat at least some death with some manner of—I'm not saying respect, but just some manner of attention to the fact that this is the end of something. This is all she wrote. This is the story. The book's closed. At least acknowledge the importance of that event, of that transition.

That's something we were talking about with the 'Hell on Earth' show, actually. With Army Medicine in Vietnam. The horror, this violence that happened in Vietnam, this gore. People's faces getting blown off. Yes, that was the horror.

There was this one scene, it blew my mind: it was electric. I had no idea what the show was going to be. Jack Stevenson really touted it in that flyer like it was just this most amazing thing. And I thought, oh, come on, Jack. What's this?

I was watching, and this guy's face is literally blown off. There are bits of teeth stuck in his face. And then they just push and prod and stick and sew, and they put his face back together.

And he's sitting up, and they say, "This soldier will be ready to go back in two weeks." And that's what's horrible. These people, they're just there, these doctors are there just to put him back so they can go back out and have something else blown off.

But if they were just reattaching his finger or his arm or his foot and they were sending him back, it wouldn't have that same electric charge, even though they were doing exactly the same thing from a medicinal point of view, and fulfilling their duties to get the soldiers back on the front line.

That's memorable, because of the spectacular nature of it. And because that

as. Balun
NTH
ELL
REET
Fury. Meat and Madness.

would hit you: "Whoa! So the doctors are sending them back." They do that with people who lost a finger or a hand or a foot or whatever. But because of the spectacular nature of it, it causes a different reaction.

I think one of the main troubles with these kinds of films is that there really is no point of view. Maybe they think there is. But when you're throwing in car crashes and surgery and war wounds and all the rest of the stuff, what is the point of view? Other than "the horror, the horror!"

If they're trying to put in some kind of a little metaphysical slant to it, where you're going to go through a catharsis, and you'll appreciate life more, I don't buy that. I buy it as, "Hey, I got something that is geekier than what you have."

With horror and gore entertainment, as an entertainment medium, when you're watching it, and you see someone get killed, you're maybe rooting for the killer, or the on-screen murder event, but you may also associate with the victim. The victim gets cut up, torn up, whatever, but you, you go on, your consciousness goes on. And there is something freeing about that. There is some sort of transcendence or whatever.

Remember that quote that's at the beginning of that Hemingway book. I think it's by John Donne or somebody, "Every man's death diminishes me, and therefore do not ask for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee." That's what I see when I watch that stuff.

Yeah, yeah, well, but that's me. I'm me, too. And all of a sudden, it's just shoved in your face and you think, "It's just so inglorious." You read all your great books about how mankind has triumphed over something, and how they've gone against the most incredible odds, and made their dreams come true or saved their country or came up with incredible scientific thoughts, or just incredible paintings, or whatever that resounded throughout history. And you just see those images that, it's just too degrading to the human spirit, psyche. To just have it treated

If you're just a bored, white suburban rock'n'roller who's seen this, and wants to go to the next step, that's where it gets more dangerous. There are guys who don't have a moral compass or anything that are weighing this out with other things, with philosophy, with real life, with respect for life or anything like that. It's just a high, it's just a thrill, like throwing in the new Metallica album. No more, no less.

It can take anything for somebody to just pop. There's no longer that arena, that Coliseum conflict. We are human. We are animals. We are of the universe, and conflict is basic nature. It must be there. And just to remove all that and portray the nice little house, the nice little family, the little Mom and Dad and kid. What's that? There are so many people that just can't relate to that kind of life, and they're shoving it down our throats all the time.

People cannot relate to that kind of life when that's all they're given. They have to create another life for themselves, and it becomes this 'twisted', 'screwed-up', 'immoral' whatever.

Hearing Jeff Dahmer talk on that show, he was just so direct. He was so aware. He wasn't Manson spouting and freaking and so on.

Whoever it was that said about the utter banality of evil. That after all is said and done, when you really meet these people face to face, they're just pissants, man. This isn't some Mephistopheles and Faust kind of thing. Or a Greek tragedy or a Shakespearean descent into madness; it's totally banal. These people are like morons.

There is nothing great or cleansing or purifying or thematic about what they're doing. They're John Wayne Gacys. They're prowling for teenagers to get blow jobs from, essentially. And when they're exposed for all they are, it's not like it is in the books. It's not like the Omen movies or something. This guy's a real bore. He's like the kind of person that makes you more violent. You just want to beat him up 'cause he's scum.

What's going on in Italy? I've heard different things from different people, that films get cut there, it's much worse. But they have the Dylan Dog Horror Festival. That's an annual event?

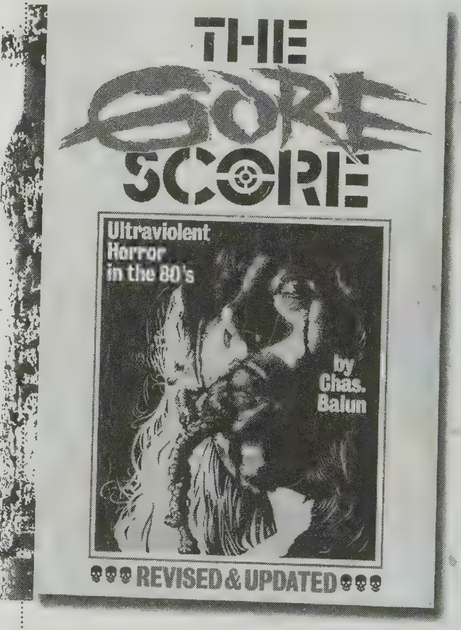
Yeah, there are uncut films and stuff. They show them all in their uncut form.

And that's a real theater? Are they well attended?

Oh, geez, yeah. It's not a theater, it's like a sports arena, where they have musical concerts or sports or whatever. They construct a stage with a great sound-system. It holds 5,000 people and it's packed to the rafters every night.

But what got the biggest reaction when I was there, and you travel all around the world to see crappy American horror sequels, you know? And you're sitting in the audience, and the audience will always react when some girl, some good-looking blonde babe would take her top off. That got them howling as much as any severed artery or evisceration.

I'm not into the Nazi lesbian torture camp scenes, I'm not into this Ted V. Mikels. I'm not into the 60s psychedelic bike gangs chain-whipping sex kittens. I got to the part I was into and thought, "I don't want to pay $20-25 for forty pages of stuff." I'll just wait it out. Life is just a little too short going over the shot list of Ted V. Mikels' outtakes.



Tim Lucas does the same thing on Video Watchdog. And even though I'm glad somebody does it; there's some historian who's actually dissecting all these different versions and will tell you what's missing from this one. Still, there's a weird pathological horror to that, to having somebody sit there on their duff with remote controls and three different TVs, and writing down verbatim a telephone call in a Jess Franco movie. As if anybody would give a fuck what the conversation was about on the telephone in a Jess Franco.

Whether it's in English, Italian, Dutch, Japanese, Malaysian, I think they're seeing the trees. They're not seeing the forest any longer.

For a country that isn't allowed to see a lot of these films, the Brits have some great film writers.
They want to make it an entertaining read, even if it's some person's own obsession. If it's written in an entertaining, informative way, then it has some kind of merit to it.

Something that I really hate is how we have to see these films. Something like Cat in the Brain just needs to be seen, especially by horror filmmakers. And who knows about it? That needs to be seen. How many people got to see Gates of Hell? Bootleg or otherwise?
How many saw that eyeball poke in Zombie on the big screen?

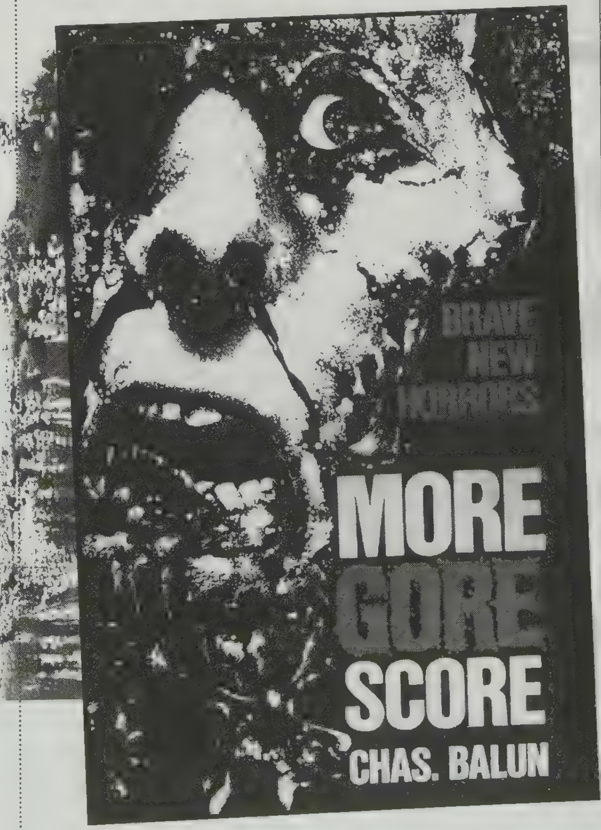
How did Film Threat see Nekromantik? They saw it on bootleg video.
I'm sure I traded with the guy who gave it to them. I know they're saying I bought a copy of theirs and duped it. Yeah, give me a fucking break! I've got better connections than that.

I'm pretty sure I must have traded, because I had a really good copy of it, as time went by, with one of the guys who originally tried to sell it in the United States, for $29.95 or $39.95. Used to put ads in Fangoria and a few magazines, and nobody bought it.

That was the one that had all German on it. I've seen a copy of that one. All the liner notes were written in German.
Oh, see, mine was subtitled.

Subtitled in English, right.
I'm sure I got it from somebody who either knew that person or had the master copy, because it was that good.

But it's a Super-8 movie. His whole following was built up from bootlegs. How many bootlegs actually circulated? It wasn't like there were 200,000.
I've got nothing to say about Buttgereit, because he's never hassled me. But it's his producer buddy, that Manfred Jellinski. Never ever gave me a chance to say what I had to say first, without him going out and trying to trash my name with everybody he could contact.



But of course he forgot the fact that I offered both of them free full-page ads in Deep Red to sell their videos, without me getting anything. Not charging for the ads, not getting any cut off the movie. And he blew me off.

It's not like you're trying to rip filmmakers off for a living. All these fans. Same with Henry. The only reason that that even eventually got a theatrical was because of the bootleg tapes.
Yeah, the groundswell of interest in it. Because there was no other way to see it. And when you're playing the political game in movie-making. They really don't care if a horror fan gets to see this or not. They don't give a shit. They only care if they're going to be making money. They're not out to complete somebody's little Joe D'Amato collection or whatever. Their only motivation—because they're not horror fans, they're accountants and businessmen—"will this make money?" And if it won't, then okay, let's go on to the next thing.

There's one basic reason why ninety-five per cent of movies on alternative video source lists—call it what you will, whatever the euphemism may be—the reason that ninety-five per cent of those movies are only being made available on a bootleg copy is financial. Because distributors are going to look at Joe D'Amato's Immagini di un convento, this Italian lesbian nun movie, and they think that no one's going to rent this.

What, we're going to pay to get 15,000 cassettes made with color artwork, and distribute them and have screenings? No one gives a shit. Oh, how about this Paul Naschy film? They don't give a shit. And oh, how about Trap Them and Kill Them, a Joe D'Amato film?

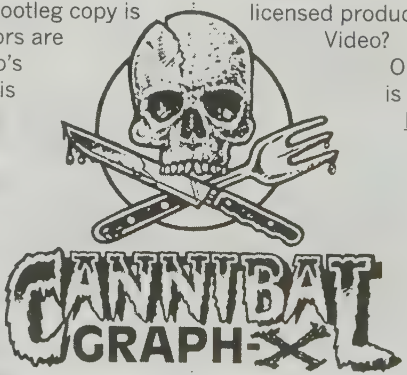
If there was money to be made, those things would be in your video stores. And they're looking at them and saying, "Ah, fuck it. We'd better not release them, because there are only fifteen horror geeks in the world who are going to buy it, and that's all." Maybe there are 1,500 if it's a really big, big, big film with an incredible reputation.

What's been your biggest seller?
The Beyond. This is uncut; it's a beautiful laser copy, it's a great zombie film. You'll never see it in this version, you'll never see it letterboxed. If you can buy a copy of this, you're lucky. But once a lot of those laserdiscs go out of stock, the imports, the Japanese ones, they don't restrike them. They don't reprint them.

The same is true of Argento's Tenebrae. That's out, forget it. You can never buy that laserdisc. How are you ever going to see that movie?

And no one's going to pick it up.
And it's going to die. I like to think that, a lot of these situations, it's like a film preservation society.

That might be something to do, though. To figure out a way. But who has the financial base for that? Mike Vraney has done really well with his Something Weird.
And how many of those does he have the video rights to? Why doesn't Film Threat jump down his throat? How many of those thousands of titles he has are officially licensed products of Something Weird Video?



One thing that sucks, too, is he got a shitty print of I Drink Your Blood. It's cut. It's a cut version, and it's such a great—I liked it. It's trash, but I really like it. The main hippie guy is running towards this guy, about to skewer his head, and all of a sudden it just cuts. And then they're in the woods.

I've got the uncut version of that, of course. I've got the uncut version of The Last House on Dead End Street, too. That scene where they're cutting apart that woman on the table just goes on and on. You can see why they cut it out.

Do you have any idea at all how to get in touch with a print of Last House on Dead End Street?
Oh, no, sure don't. That's from New York, though. New York filmmakers. You'd be a lot better off looking for it there.

Is Victor Janos someone who actually exists?
I don't know. I think that's a pseudonym. It's all done by film students who all used pseudonyms. I guess it was called The Cuckoo Clocks from Hell at one time. And also called The Funhouse.

Maybe we should put out an ad and try to find them.
Devastating film, yeah.

Yeah, the doe foot, ah, it's great.
Who came up with that? It's a twisted consciousness at work here.

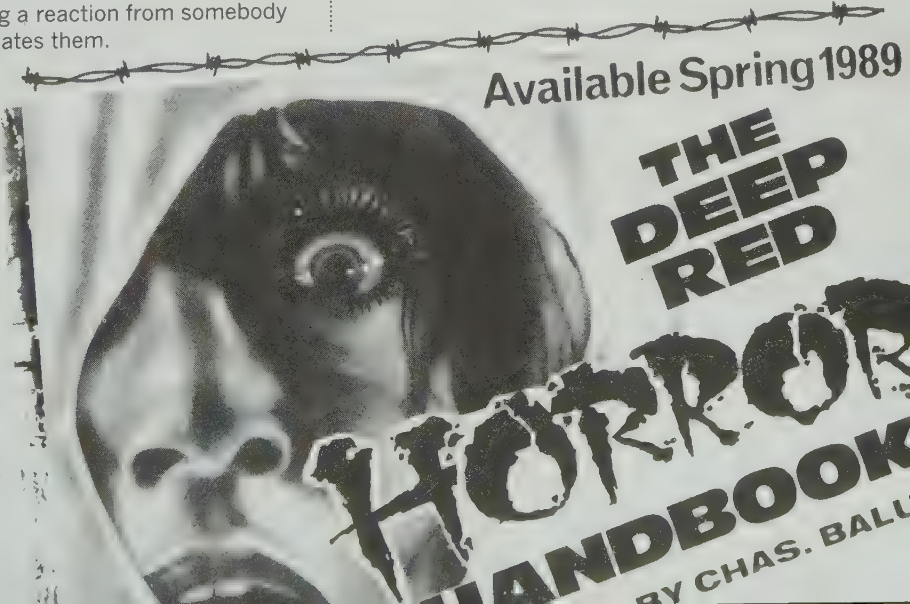
Do you care to discuss the Film Threat attack?
When all that shit was happening, I couldn't imagine there were that many people who really gave a shit. And now, a year-and-a-half or whatever down the line, I'm not sure if it's just beating a dead horse or if people actually really do give a shit about that stuff. I actually tire of those kind of invective-fueled assaults, the back-stabbing and the whole fanzine scene, and the whole horror business. I try to avoid it, although I jump in every once in a while, if it's Charles Band or somebody really pulling some shit.

There are all these little zine editors who go out of their way to insult people and stir up trouble, assuming that they have no life, and getting a reaction from somebody somehow validates them.

Why would Film Threat target you first? It seems like what you were doing is what they wanted.
Easy, because I have a name and it's recognizable. If they picked Joe Blow, who has forty-eight machines running simultaneously duping all this other shit, that doesn't matter because nobody knows him. So, if they're ragging on his ass, they won't get the response that they want, because nobody knows who he is. But they know who I am, and regardless of the enormity of the situation, I have a name that you can hang on to. It's much easier to excoriate somebody with a name. People know who they're talking about.

It started solely because you were duping tapes? It didn't start before then? It was like they found out that Chas. is distributing bootlegs, and then just targeted you?
See, I don't look at it as just some campaign against me. They fucked under a bunch of friends that I have. I know Donald Farmer, I know Rick Sullivan; I know these guys as human beings, not as some icons or symbols and stuff. I know them as people. Donald's been over here for dinner and stuff; I know him as a friend. I know Rick Sullivan, met him at a convention back East. Where did I come up with the term 'chunk blower'? It didn't come out of the blue or a little birdie told me; Rick Sullivan always used that in Gore Gazette. I owe him some little psychic debt for that alone.

There's been a bunch of other directors, writers, artists that they've chosen to single out and give a bunch of shit to. So I'm pissed off that it's not just me; it's also a lot of my



other friends. Actually, before the duping thing or the Nekromantik deal, they allowed a situation to get totally out of hand with Guinea Pig; they got the FBI involved, and people were snitchin' out everybody down the line. That really pissed me off.

That was that thing with Charlie Sheen?
Charlie Sheen and Adam Rifkin.

They were watching it and they freaked out and said, "This shouldn't be made"? They started it? They said go out and target this thing?
Here's my angle on it, because I'm the horse's mouth. Dennis Daniel used to write for Deep Red magazine. He started sucking up to Chris Gore and Film Threat, writing a few pieces for them. One time he asked me, for his birthday, if I'd make the most outrageous tape from my collection, so he could show it to his friends on his birthday and gross everybody out. That kind of a primitive let-me-outgeek-them thing. It'll be another candle on my birthday cake.

"It's not something I'm really into; it's just something I'm going to use to shock people."
And that, to me, is what's kind of obscene about a lot of these little tapes. Just the worst carnage and the worst kind of atrocities.

Make it something worth watching.
It's a beer and pizza night kind of fodder. So he asked me to make him the most outrageous tape that I could for his birthday party. So not only did I do that, I put it on high-grade tape at my own expense, and mailed it second-day UPS so he could have it there for his party.

I put Guinea Pig on there and The Best of Guinea Pig or some other shit, so it filled out the two hours of what he requested. And at the beginning of it, I clipped on a little short video thing that someone had done that had a quote from me. They had it typeset, and they filmed it. It was part of the video thing for whatever it was.

And it said, "Anything worth doing is worth overdoing." Chas. Balun, unquote. So I put that on the front of the tape. So there's my name on it. And I send that off to Dennis. It was a big hit at his party. It did its intended duty, and I guess I was glad for that.

Then on my birthday, a couple of months down the line, I get a call from Dennis. "Chas., don't be surprised if you get a call from FBI agent Dale so-and-so. He wants to talk to you about Guinea Pig." And I'm going, "Yeah, Dennis, get a grip." "Oh, I'm not kidding. I just got off the phone with him, and he's calling all these people." And I go, "What the fuck happened?"

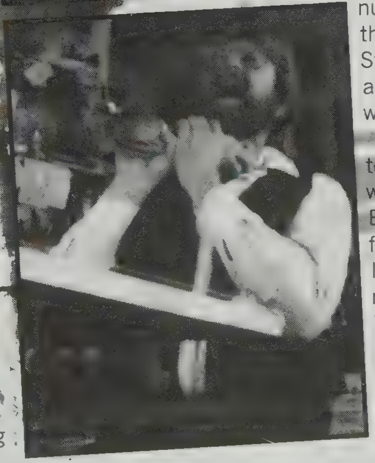
Apparently he gave the tape to Chris Gore to gain points, I suppose. And Chris looked at it, and then he gave it to Charlie Sheen and this other cunt. If Gore, anybody, knows anything, they would know that thing was fucking faked. No one ever does that with the snuff movies. There are eight camera angles, close-ups, and credits!

And she's still alive!

And on and on. And, gee, if they're going to kill somebody and snuff them, why isn't there any nudity? If they're gonna kill somebody, why don't they show their tits, why don't they show their pussy?

And immediately I knew things were suspect, because the first time there's any real violence in the film, the guy kills a chicken, and it's a fucking fake chicken! Okay, they're not going to kill anybody. They can't even kill the chicken.

So it got into old Charlie Sheen and Adam Rifkin's hands. I guess Charlie knew somebody who was a cop or FBI agent, and he was so horrified and shocked that they snitched it out and everything. And of course, Gore should have known it was fake.



Charlie Sheen thought that it was his public duty?

He could have pulled the plug on that right away and said, "Oh, no, this is fake." But he just let that carry on, and people started snitching out person after person. And my friend Steve Bissette got indirectly involved in it 'cause I guess old Gore gave the FBI his unlisted home phone number. And then he realized Steve didn't have anything to do with it.

And Bissette told me this and I was really pissed. Bissette's a good family man, lives out in the mountains in Vermont. He had nothing to do with any of this shit. But here's some chickenshit guy snitching out all of his friends.

"Oh, no, it's not from me. Even though they said they got it from me. They didn't get it from me. They got it from Dennis, and Dennis got it from..." And then snitching people out all down the line.

I was kind of pissed off on that whole count, because all they had to do was call me. And all along I had the Making of Guinea Pig with the second camera behind him, auditioning actresses, showing the cuts where the air bubbles were in the blood line, where the girl is laughing, doing a second take.

It was like this whole joke. And they showed all the special effects. Here's how we did the hand moving, and it's all this cable-controlled stuff. And they interviewed the director, all the special effects guys, and all the girls that were trying out for it. Come on, how stupid can people who work for the federal government be?

First of all, this thing was on laserdisc. It didn't start off as some little Super-8 thing left in somebody's post office box. It got released in Japan as a video, as a laserdisc. I got it from somebody who duped it from a Japanese laserdisc, with the credits, with all the shit and stuff on it. There's like eight or nine of them in the whole series.

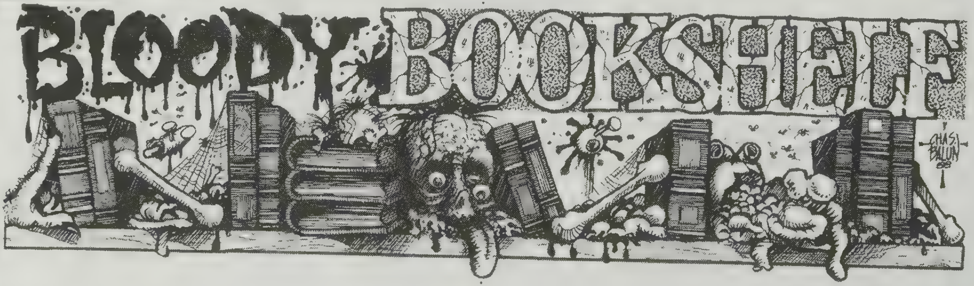
Why didn't they start there? How did this get around? It's obviously Japanese. Why not just contact the filmmakers to begin with?
I don't know. I've just gotten disillusioned with a whole lot of things in this business. This is not an anomalous situation. This happens all the time. You just see people clambering over other people's backs. Knifing them in the back, walking over their faces, over the top of their heads in the mud to get onto their next little ladder of success or whatever. Just to make some piece of crap horror film, horror book, horror magazine, whatever it is. It's fucking sickening.

It seems, especially with horror, it should be more of a coalition than everyone dividing up.
You can see how anal it's gotten, with all these splinter groups and sub-genres. No longer is it horror, it's Hong Kong horror. It's bondage with shaved heads and acid enemas. It's not just atrocity; it's car crash and autopsy atrocities, and suicide tapes. It's Italian softcore porno. It's Spanish splatter Westerns.

Some of that, though, are just people's interests. That's their interest, that's what they're going to pursue.

With you, it's gore films. Who else had gone ahead and just said, "Splatter, gore!" and presented it the way you did, when everyone else was dismissing it? They were just, "Oh, it's another splatter movie," and you're praising it.
But all along, you know, I try to have a balanced viewpoint on this, because that's not my whole life. I have other interests. And so I do this as a good balance. When I like to see something, I like to see it in full strength. If I'm not just involved with it twenty-four hours a day, I want to see a full-on outrageous gore flick, just like I want to hear a full-out outrageous metal band. I don't want Metal Lite, you know? I want Napalm Death or something. I want Nuclear Assault. I don't want Poison. So when it's balanced out with that kind of shit, I always like the more extreme, the more intensive experiences. I couldn't live with just watching nothing but gore films and cannibal films. For Chrissake, I see almost every movie released. Some of my favorite films have nothing to do with the genre.

But I do interviews and I talk to other people, and they have no interest in that. It's, "How many times have you seen the Dutch print with the additional eleven seconds of Umberto Lenzi's Trapped or Make Them Die Slowly?" "I've seen Dawn of the Dead 256 times. How 'bout you, Chas.?" No. Life's too short.



Life's also too short for bad movies. Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers is not a good film. It's boring and it's stupid, and it's a waste of Gunnar Hansen. There was nothing about it that made me smile.
Oh, yeah, it stinks. Gunnar's terrible. Gunnar isn't much of an actor. He's a sweet guy, but boy, when he's in front of a camera, he does not act. He's the same way as that in Demon Lover. You just feel bad for him. He walked out of the screening of Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers and he went to the Egyptian Theater on their opening night, their big party and all that stuff. I can't blame him.

The Zombie Book and Film Evil, were those ever realized?
No, Film Evil became the Deep Red Horror Handbook, actually. And the Zombie Book, that was going to be a project at FantaCo. I guess they have no interest in it. That's my take. That's why I'm looking for other people to publish it.

How'd you first approach them? Were you just going to conventions and meeting people? And you said, "I can compile some stuff." And they said, "We'll put it out."
I printed Connoisseur's Guide to the Contemporary Horror Film by myself. I was working at a college as a graphic artist and I got hooked up with a printer and stuff, and I got to do things at cost and all this shit.

I printed up a bunch of them and just went through every ad in Fangoria and sent out sample copies to every address I could find. FantaCo liked it, and they said, "Oh, well, send us fifty copies." They sold out. "Send us 150 copies," and then they sold those. They just kept selling, year after year, and I just kept reprinting them.

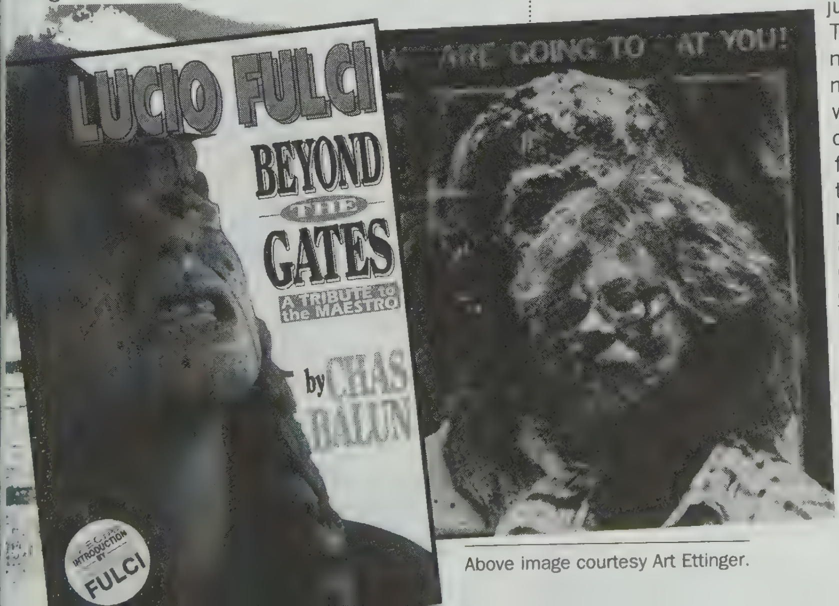
And then they suggested I do a new book, and that's why I put together Horror Holocaust. And I did that for them. And then that sold real well, it sold out. Which was pretty good, 'cause I was totally unknown. Who the fuck am I? I did the cover, I did everything, the layout.

How many copies did they print up, of Horror Holocaust?
I think they did 10,000, which isn't bad for the first book, and it sold out. And then I did Gore Score for them, and that's still been one of their big sellers, one of their most popular ones.

I picked up my copy at Applause Books. It's all theater and drama books, and there were three copies of Gore Score there.
That's cool. The thing just kept working out. It was during a peak horror period, and my exposure with plugging into that and starting to write for Fangoria and all that; it was cool.

And Deep Red was a good concept when it came out, because that was when there was just Fangoria. There was really no other horror magazine. It was just kind of a nascent fanzine situation then. I can't really name any fanzines, except for Gore Gazette, but that's always been around.

I like old Rick. He stood up for me. That's why his name and Eric Caidin's name



Above image courtesy Art Ettinger.

were in Bled to Death and stuff. Both of those guys went out of their way. And when this whole Film Threat thing was happening, they stood their ground.

Did you actually suffer repercussions, except for the article? Did anything actually happen? Because you're still distributing tapes. Is that not supposed to be discussed? It seems you send your list out pretty easily.
Well, what do you think? Don't you think it was just some kind of opportunistic publicity stunt on their part? That if they wanted to go to court on something like that, they would really—I never told how many copies I sold or how much money was involved. Hey, let them spend $100,000, then I'll tell them.

Let's just see the logic of this. Was it just something to stir up some trouble, stir up a hornet's nest? Are they really willing to pay a lawyer a few hundred dollars an hour to track all this down, and then go get a judgment, and then when it finally comes out, "Oh, wow, you must have sold thousands of tapes."

Okay, look, here's your fucking 160 bucks. Why don't you shove it up your ass?

I think it had more to do with that you were selling tapes that they were selling.
And any time I'm alerted to the fact that it actually has a legitimate release, no matter how illegitimate, I cease and desist. This is some fanzine, and some guy's selling Gorotica or Goregasm, I have no desire to be involved in any of that. That's not the point, ripping off little struggling filmmakers.

Hey, I feel good when somebody gets The Beyond, and they see it, and they say, "Hey, I would never have had a chance to see this movie otherwise."

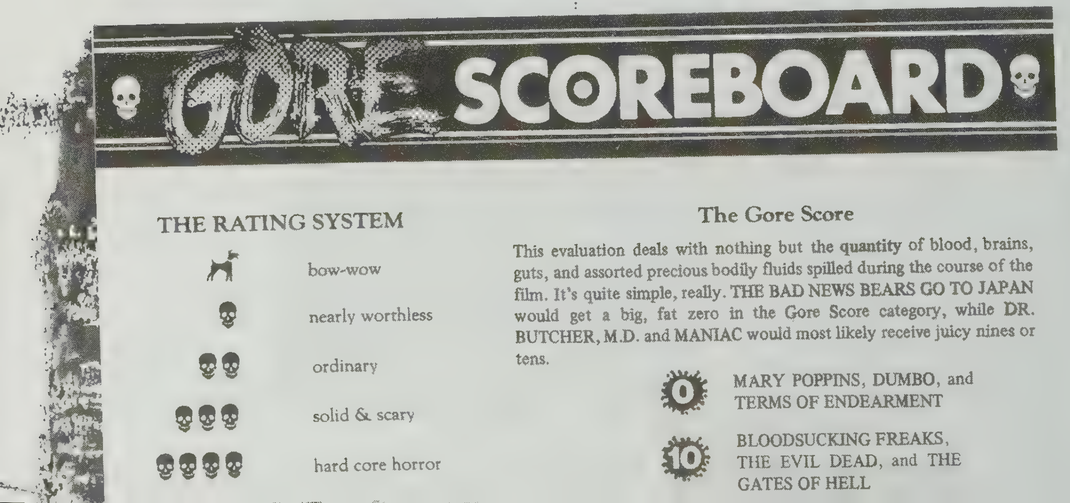
Same with Guinea Pig. It was shot on video, a little gorefest. How else?
You'll never see any of those things. So it's some kind of a service. I bought plenty of tapes from other people. It got to the point where I was duping movies for free, for people I didn't even know who wouldn't even send my postage. But they'd send me a nice little "Oh, Chas., I read all your books. I can't find this movie anywhere—hint, hint!"

And I send it to them, and then after a while I'm thinking, "Chas., what are you doing? These people aren't even sending you postage, nor are they even sending you a tape. Get a grip, Buster."

I go to these conventions and I ask people that have 500 tapes out there they're selling and shit, "God, how many machines do you have?" "Oh, I have forty-eight of them."

And I can't believe it. I have two VCRs in my front room, and I have two VCRs in my bedroom. So how many movies do you realistically think I can tape doing that? And having a job to boot. And how many times do I say, "Aw, fuck it. I don't want to do this."

You don't have a laserdisc player?
No. And I don't advertise anywhere, because I don't want to get any more machines. I just wanted to have it a little Deep Red family type of thing. And that's how I wanted to keep it.



GORE SCOREBOARD

THE RATING SYSTEM

🐕	bow-wow
💀	nearly worthless
💀💀	ordinary
💀💀💀	solid & scary
💀💀💀💀	hard core horror

The Gore Score

This evaluation deals with nothing but the **quantity** of blood, brains, guts, and assorted precious bodily fluids spilled during the course of the film. It's quite simple, really. THE BAD NEWS BEARS GO TO JAPAN would get a big, fat zero in the Gore Score category, while DR. BUTCHER, M.D. and MANIAC would most likely receive juicy nines or tens.

0	MARY POPPINS, DUMBO, and TERMS OF ENDEARMENT
10	BLOODSUCKING FREAKS, THE EVIL DEAD, and THE GATES OF HELL

If I advertise, like, Midnight Video or all those other ones in Fangoria and Psychotronic, that means I'd have to buy a bunch of machines and be involved in doing that all the time.

I'm an artist and a writer and stuff. I want to play my electric guitar. I want to have a life. I don't want to be doing this all the time. I want to draw, want to paint, and I want to do these other little activities. I don't get any artistic satisfaction out of doing them. And I don't want to do it on anywhere approaching a full-time basis.

What do you do to support yourself now?
I'm a commercial artist. That's what I've done forever.

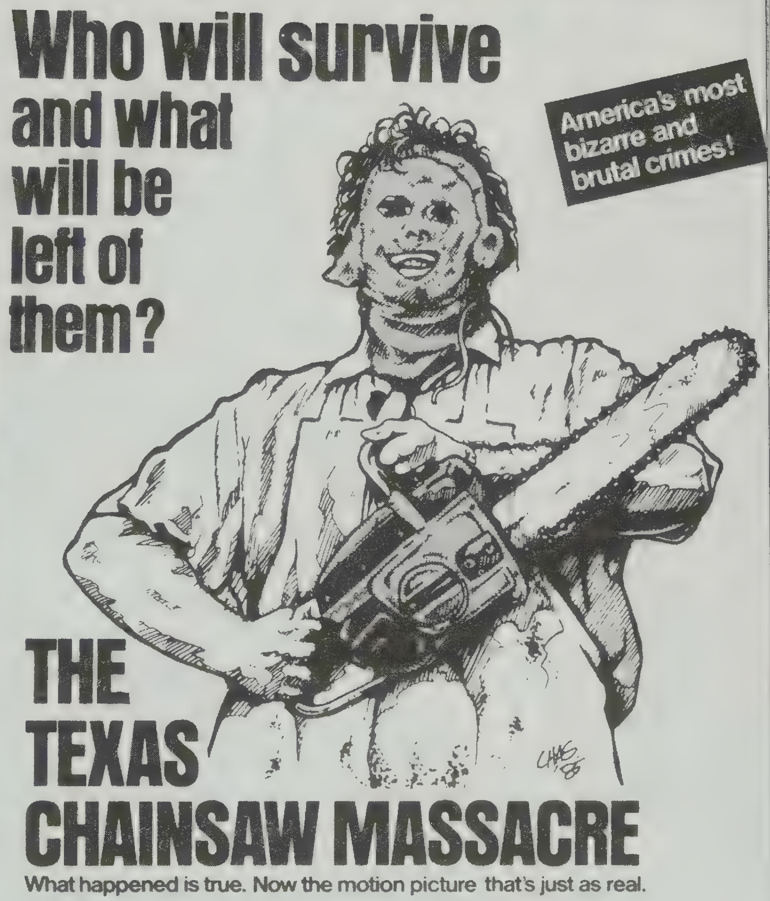
Graphic arts.
Yeah. I have a darkroom in my house, I have a process camera. I do all my own camera work, color separations. I've got a computer. I've got like three art studios in my house. I've been painting for twenty years, I've been airbrushing, I've been designing corporate logos, video boxes, and CD covers, the whole nine yards.

I do a lot of stuff for local businesses. Tim Ritter, the guy that did Truth or Dare, that little splatter movie in the 80s. He did a sequel to that called Wicked Games. I designed the video box. I did some CD covers and EP covers and stuff for some heavy metal bands.

I do a lot of work for screen printers around here, a lot of t-shirt design stuff. I design a lot of logos for restaurants or corporations. Whether it's coming up with a brand-new concept or something they supply. I do cartooning, I do airbrush painting, I do the whole nine yards. And most of it's in-house, because I've got all the equipment. I've been doing it for twenty years.

Every book I did for FantaCo was all laid up on boards with all the key-line marks for photos, and the photos included with the percentage, and where it was supposed to be cropped and stuff like that. I did things for the lowest possible budget ever and it still looked pretty good.

The most important part is the energy involved in it and the concept, and if it really has something to offer. If it does, it's not going to matter if it's typewritten and stapled together. It's still going to have the appeal. However, if you don't have anything to say or anything worthwhile, it doesn't matter if you use 500-pound stock and it's all in color.


Who will survive and what will be left of them?
America's most bizarre and brutal crimes!
CHAS '86
THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
What happened is true. Now the motion picture that's just as real.

Deep Red 7 was a pretty good book.
Yeah, I was happy with that. I thought it was pretty cool. I had a lot of information in there. That was one of our worst sellers, too.

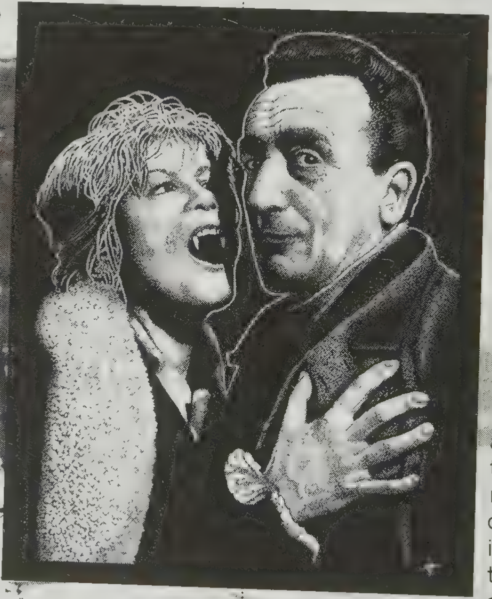
Why? Because of the price?
Yeah, I don't think FantaCo ever promoted it right. I never wanted to call it a magazine. I wanted it to be like the Deep Red Horror Handbook, a special edition kind of thing. Because, fuck, it was square-bound, with the color, with all the other shit, and was going to cost more. And it was going to be thicker and bigger and better.

I always wanted it to be a book, but I think they blew it by just always calling it Deep Red 7. All the other Deep Reds are $4.95. This one's $14.95. What's the deal? They just kind of let it lay there and never promoted it and never did anything with it. That was one of our best issues.

I love that picture from the first Deep Red for Cannibal Holocaust. I love the Bolex in the shot.
Yeah, that's the German lobby card. That is Cannibal Holocaust. That's also the only lobby card set I've ever seen that had that photo of the piranha attack, where that guy's strapped to the log and there's piranhas hanging from his legs. That was from a German lobby card set.

It's too bad about Braindead. It was a gore film, but it wasn't really a horror film. It wasn't really scary or anything, but it was beautiful, whatever it was.

I guess that's why they released it, because it wasn't scare/death; because it was comedy, they let it go.



Barbara Steele and Mario Bava by Chas. Balun.

It's amazing they showed that. That scene with the Toro lawnmowers. People must've been screaming in the theaters.

I love what happens in the theater. There were a hundred people at VanBebber's screening for My Sweet Satan. It was sold out at the New York Underground Film Festival, and John Waters and Paul Bartel both showed up. These people making big movies showed up to watch these little movies, and the audience was screaming for this twenty-minute movie. It was great.

Do you want to tuck anything else in that people should be hearing from Chas. Balun?
I don't know if it's relevant, but it's a quote that's always helped me understand maybe not just horror, but the whole world a little better. It's a quote by Thomas Edison that I always remember, and I know I've used it. It helps me when I go outside and I look at the way things are; it helps me get a better focus on things, because it makes more sense than any other aphorisms I've heard from Jesus or Buddha or any of these other folks.

Thomas Edison said, and it's 1905 or whatever, "Five per cent of the people think, ten per cent of the people think they know how to think, and eighty-five per cent would rather die than think." That helps me.

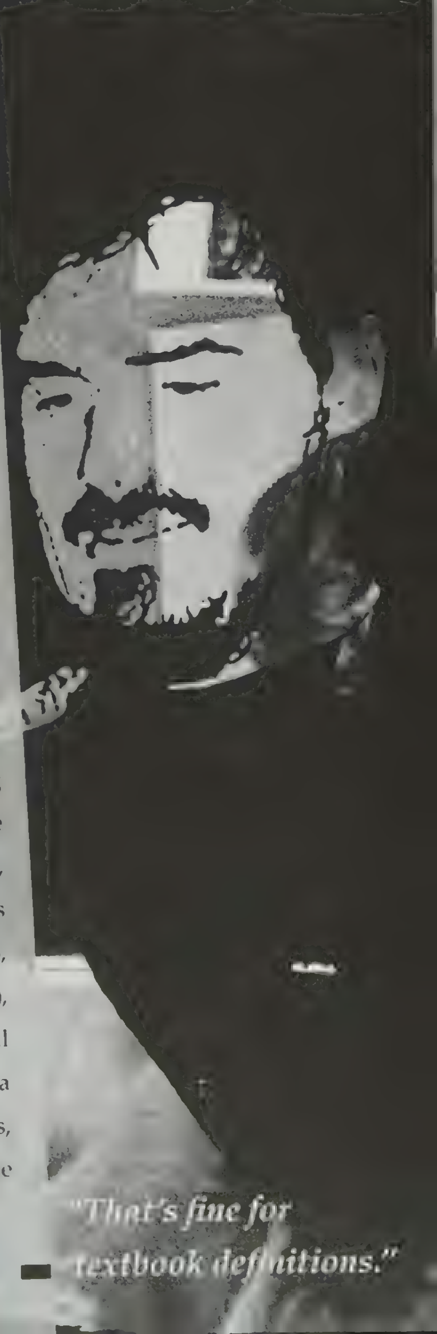
It's not that these people are Republicans and these people are Democrats, and these people are Catholics and they're Protestants, and these people are black and these people are Latino, and these people are whatever.

That's what makes sense. That just constantly reverberates in my brain, and I think, yeah, that's one of the truest things I've ever read.

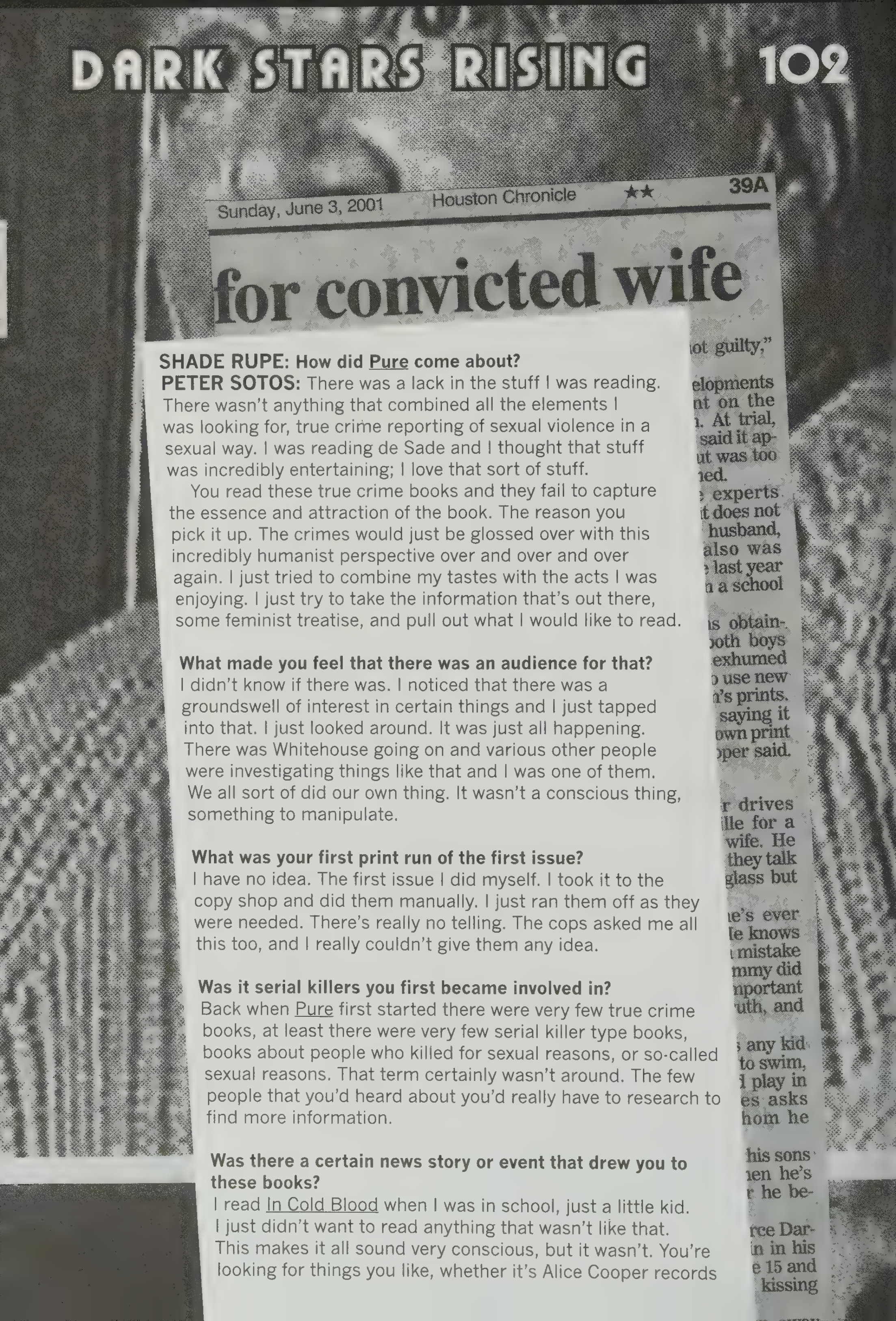
PETER SOTOS

ONE OF THE MORE memorable texts from Adam Parfrey's seminal collection Apocalypse Culture is author Peter Sotos' interview conducted by Controlled Bleeding's Paul Lemos. Before this most had only heard about Mr. Sotos' zine Pure and its contents. For years Peter Sotos was a matter of speculation while Whitehouse slumbered. In the early 90s, as the band reawakened, public awareness focused again on Mr. Sotos and just how a simple zine could result in tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees and the demonization of an American artist.

I wrote Peter through some contact address I found somewhere and received a very friendly and congenial letter back. Eloquent is a fair adjective for this 'monster' who continues to enrage and incite, merely for noting human behavior for what it is. Peter left Whitehouse after the notorious September 2002 Batofar show in Paris, and has concentrated on his writing since, releasing his material through my own Rude Shape Books (Special), Void Books (Selfish, Little and Comfort and Critique), with Creation Books helming the reissues and additional works. Here now is a wonderful conversation with a brilliant social satirist and commentator, Mr. Peter Sotos, one of the kindest and most gentle men I've been fortunate enough to acquaint myself with.



"That's fine for textbook definitions."



Sunday, June 3, 2001 Houston Chronicle ★★ 39A

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SHADE RUPE: How did Pure come about?

PETER SOTOS: There was a lack in the stuff I was reading. There wasn't anything that combined all the elements I was looking for, true crime reporting of sexual violence in a sexual way. I was reading de Sade and I thought that stuff was incredibly entertaining; I love that sort of stuff.

You read these true crime books and they fail to capture the essence and attraction of the book. The reason you pick it up. The crimes would just be glossed over with this incredibly humanist perspective over and over and over again. I just tried to combine my tastes with the acts I was enjoying. I just try to take the information that's out there, some feminist treatise, and pull out what I would like to read.

What made you feel that there was an audience for that?

I didn't know if there was. I noticed that there was a groundswell of interest in certain things and I just tapped into that. I just looked around. It was just all happening. There was Whitehouse going on and various other people were investigating things like that and I was one of them. We all sort of did our own thing. It wasn't a conscious thing, something to manipulate.

What was your first print run of the first issue?

I have no idea. The first issue I did myself. I took it to the copy shop and did them manually. I just ran them off as they were needed. There's really no telling. The cops asked me all this too, and I really couldn't give them any idea.

Was it serial killers you first became involved in?

Back when Pure first started there were very few true crime books, at least there were very few serial killer type books, books about people who killed for sexual reasons, or so-called sexual reasons. That term certainly wasn't around. The few people that you'd heard about you'd really have to research to find more information.

Was there a certain news story or event that drew you to these books?

I read In Cold Blood when I was in school, just a little kid. I just didn't want to read anything that wasn't like that. This makes it all sound very conscious, but it wasn't. You're looking for things you like, whether it's Alice Cooper records

PETER SOTOS

years after sons' deaths, man figh

or whatever was going on at the time. You're looking for things that are fairly violent. You just notice that there are certain strains of thought that run through everything.

Were you making separations between the depths of a killer's crimes then?
When Pure first started I think I was twenty-one. There was stuff I would pull out of papers. If there was stuff going on I'd find out about it. If there was something going on in Florida I'd make sure I'd get the Florida papers, make phone calls, and do whatever I had to do.

I went to a lot of trials then. This was before John Waters popularized it. I would just go up to 26th and California, where most of the criminal trials happen in Chicago, and I would just go hang out there. I'd go through the call sheets and run down those and see what was good. I came across some amazing things. So I would just follow those. Then you'd hear about Robin Gecht, and you'd hear about Henry Lee Lucas who was getting a lot of press, and you knew that there was a big difference between the two. From the information you were getting and the things Lucas was saying and the outrage he was causing, it was just really empty.

I was looking for something that was a little more real, a little more, embarrassingly enough, close to the bone, as far as your own personal tastes go. That's really what Pure was. If I had made any sort of differentiation between the murderers and the acts, it all came down to my own personal tastes, what I enjoy, to focus on.

What audience did you expect for Pure?
It was done mainly for myself. I didn't really know how people were going to accept it. Most of the people that got it were involved in music, people who were involved with Whitehouse or Throbbing Gristle or whatever at the time. The reaction to it was not good. Most of these people, putting out their own magazines about supposed 'industrial' thinking and all that crap, really hated Pure.

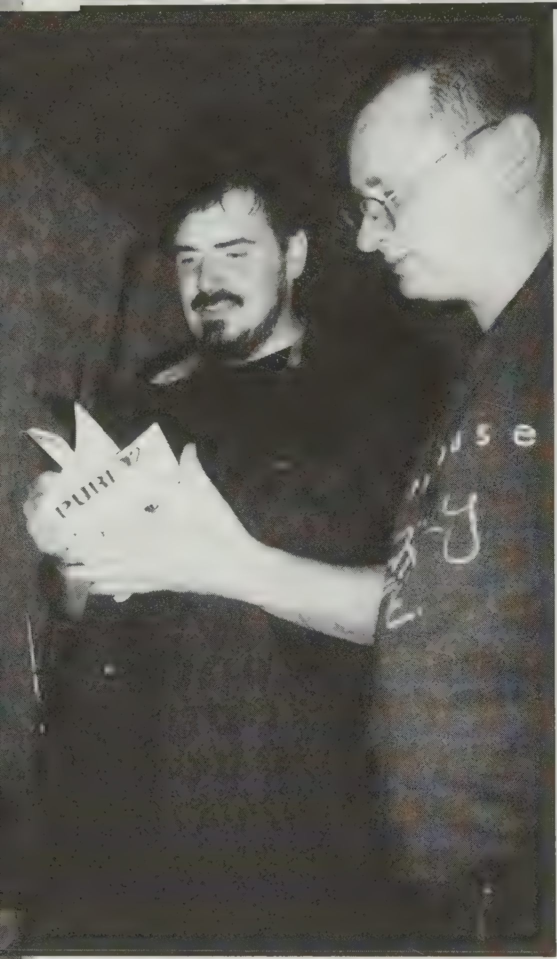
It was just for the people who seemed to like that sort of stuff. I didn't know where it was going to go. It didn't do very well as far as critiques.

It found an audience. There are people from the first issue that have been close friends ever since.

When did you first start corresponding with Whitehouse?
The first issue was done right before the first U.S. Whitehouse tour. They called me up, I had the P.O. Box when I went on tour, but I didn't have the issue out.

All this was happening at the same time. Whitehouse had just put out Psychopathia Sexualis. William and I had started corresponding about that time. I told him I was doing this magazine and that I was huge fan of Whitehouse.

Were you aware of Gacy's activities during this time?



Peter Sotos and Philip Best after Whitehouse Live Action 73 in Pittsburgh, 1995.

Next page: Five from Live Action 73, Pittsburgh, 1995

I was fifteen when Gacy's crimes were discovered. I remember going out with my friends, to Gacy's house, not too far from where I lived. We went to his house and watched them tear it down and pull the bodies out the day it happened. When the news first broke, we were there, behind the barricades.

It wasn't this big sadistic thing. It was almost a natural thing, which is something I really believe in.

When I was in high school I got in tons of fights. There was a real emphasis back then, in the 70s, on violence. Everything sort of revolved around that. Going to Gacy's house was almost a natural thing for you and your friends to do on a day. I knew everyone there. It's all we talked about.

Were any of your friends associated with Gacy's victims?

Yeah, my brother went to school with one of them. You can't live in Chicago without Gacy connections. Same thing with Larry Eyler. You go into a gay bar you've got an Eyler connection. I remember Danny Bridges. I remember when Larry Eyler was let out. Everyone knew Larry Eyler. He used to pick up people in areas that I would frequent.

When I was a kid, Gacy was all over my neighborhood. He was a builder. He built Brickyard Mall which is just a few blocks from me. The kids had to come from the neighborhoods that he had built in.

How well did you know the guy in England in Metgumbnerbone?

I didn't even know he was in a band at the time. It turned out I had the guy's record in my collection, which was further damage as far as the police were concerned. But I don't even think I put the two together at the time.

There was a sort of network going on. People were much more bloodthirsty back then. People were involved in very questionable endeavors. It wasn't this limp-wristed music culture crap. People were much more interested in really doing things. I don't mean killing and stuff like that, but they knew what they were working with, dealing with.

How did you get in contact with Metgumbnerbone?

The guy wrote me a letter. I didn't know that he was in this band and he wrote me and told me that he had just been arrested for graverobbing. I said, "Congratulations and good luck and let me know what you can about the crime. Was it sexually motivated, what was going on?" I think I even said something like I hoped it wasn't something silly like getting a thigh bone to sing through, which of course it was.

They actually had that letter, which was just brutal to see in court. Me asking about his grave-robbing peccadilloes and trying to guide him in a sexual way. Scotland Yard had been checking all this guy's mail. As it turned out the police in Chicago had already had a copy of Pure forwarded to them from someone else, I think in Belgium. They had

PETER SOTOS

intercepted a copy. But this is the one they acted on.

Did you mail him a copy in jail?
No, he was already at home. He had already been sentenced. They were just keeping an eye on him because they suspected him of being much more trouble.

Scotland Yard gave the magazine to these ridiculous psychiatrists in England and they came up with this profile of me as someone who was definitely, in their words, involved in the kidnap, murder and torture of children. The police here watched me for nine months and followed me and checked my mail.

Were you aware of this at all?
No, I wasn't. I knew there were funny things going on at my post office box, recording my mail, and I thought good luck to them. I didn't really think that there was all that much trouble.

I naively believed in the First Amendment. I thought you could say anything you wanted. And then I was arrested on an obscenity charge. Unfortunately they searched my house, which was a wholly questionable episode, and came up with a felony charge, the possession of child pornography.

At the end of Pure 3 you mention Pure 4 and the release of videotapes. Did Pure 3 receive an actual release?
It made its way out. A few people had copies. There was no actual release. It was all finished but it hadn't gone out in the mail yet.

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The State's Attorney was quoted in the paper the next day as being very happy that they were able to stop the release of the third issue.

How long did that whole process take? It's been several years between Pure and Parasite.
My trial lasted three years. It was ridiculous. Everyone said it was the longest trial they had ever been on. The lawyers and the judge. The judge was really pissed off. There were so many things happening. It went to the Illinois Supreme Court and it was supposed to go to the Federal level but we didn't have any money and it was costing a fortune. It was just a nightmare.

My lawyers were very well known, very powerful lawyers. One lawyer was the head prosecutor against [Richard] Speck and the other lawyer was the judge who sentenced Gacy to death. I had real heavy-duty lawyers. They had never seen a case before where the police wouldn't cooperate with them, wouldn't talk to them, wouldn't give them any information. They failed to even file the right charges. They had filed the wrong charges at one point and refused to drop them, even if the wording was wrong. They quickly dropped the obscenity charges because they knew they couldn't win, once they had the felony charges.

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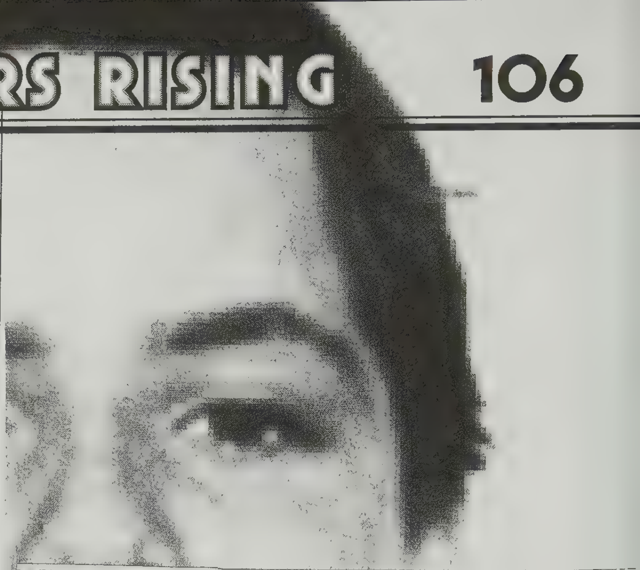


It was just a nightmare. They were completely uncooperative.

Did they not allow you to produce anything at that point?
Yeah, I had this really weird proviso in my bond. I had a $100,000 bond. And I couldn't be around any kids, couldn't be near any schoolyards, which was pathetic. But beyond that, I had to live with my mother.

That was part of the proviso?
I had to move out of my apartment and live with my mother. I also always had to be accompanied by an adult when I went out on the street. Really pathetic. You can't imagine.

Has your mother read Pure?
No. My mother and I never got along. We were never close. My dad was dead at that time. It was a ridiculous situation.

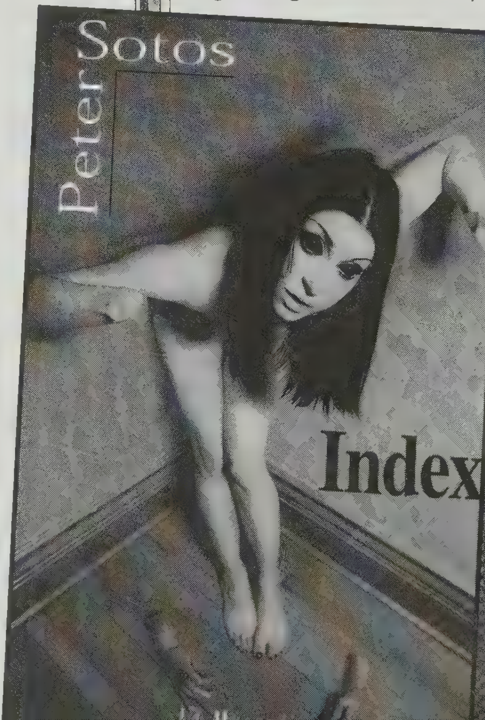
When were you finally able to move out of your mother's home?
When my lawyers complained. They did these amazing things. My older brother, who had no connection with me, I'm not close with my family, had just passed the bar exam and had come through with flying colors. Huge upper percentile. They wouldn't classify him. He couldn't get through the ethics committee. They wouldn't licence him as a lawyer, all because of me. And I had nothing to do with these people.

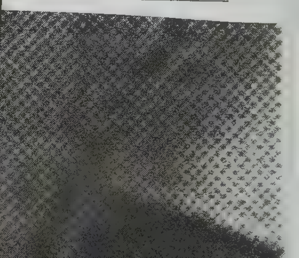
My lawyers actually had to spend time, when I'm paying them, convincing the ethics committee to okay my brother. He's now a very successful lawyer. Just pathetic things like that, which had nothing to do with the case at all. They really believed that I was involved in some incredible conspiracy.

Wasn't there some sort of provision that you weren't allowed to leave Chicago?
I'm a felon. I do have a conviction. I was on probation for two years. I had to pay a huge fine. I had to have psychiatric help for two years, which was a joke. I can't leave the state without registering, that kind of crap. I'm a convicted sex offender. It's a felony, not a misdemeanor.

You're a convicted sex offender for producing Pure?
Not for producing Pure; for possessing child pornography.

How much stuff did you actually have?





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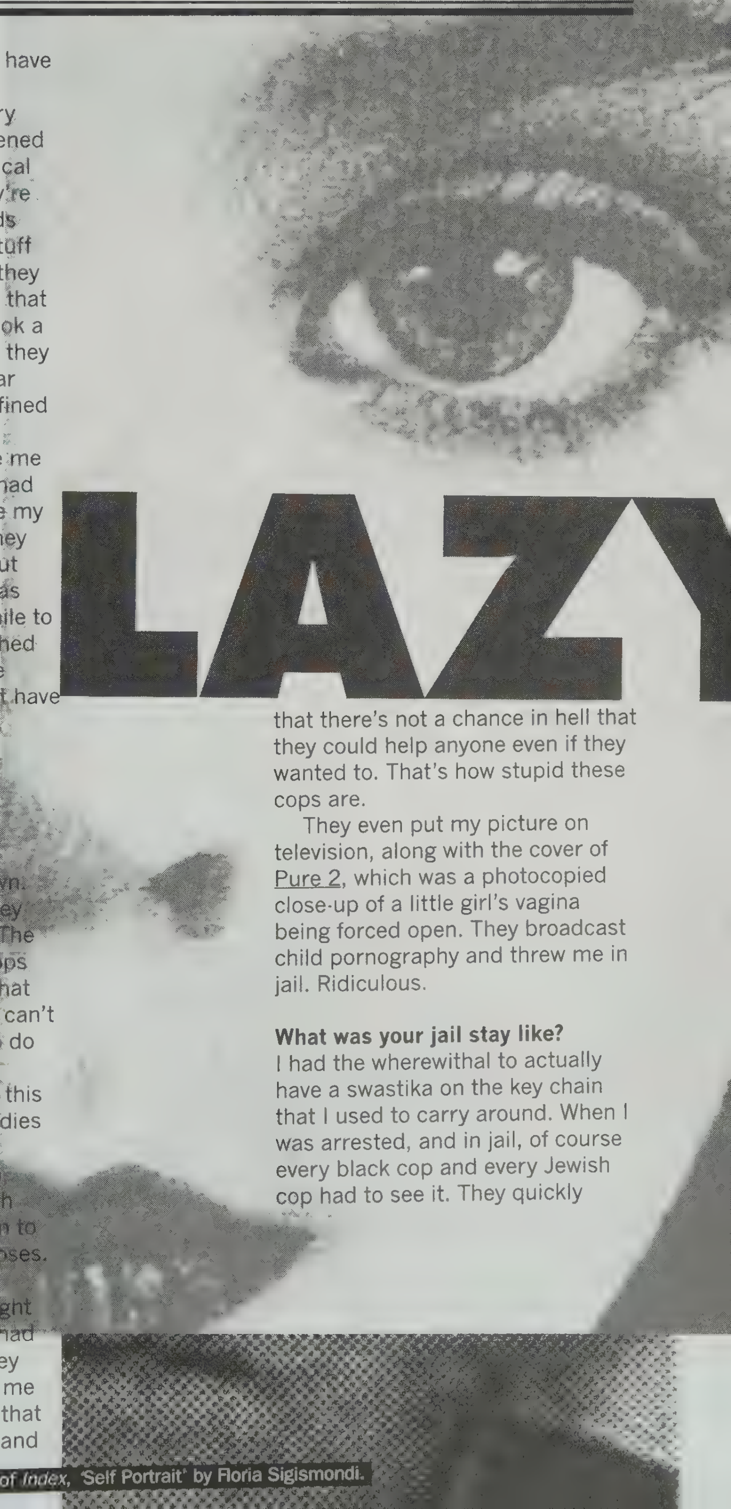


The question is how much did I have and how much did they get. I'm telling you, these people are very good at their job. I'm in a weakened position. They won for all practical purposes. So for me to say they're stupid, nyah, nyah, nyah, sounds silly. But the truth is even the stuff they gave me back years later, they had no idea what they had. Not that I had a huge collection. They took a few kiddie porn magazines and they whittled them down to particular pictures that definitely were defined as child pornography.

They kept all that. They gave me some stuff that they obviously had no idea they had. They gave me my Linda Lovelace animal films. They had to. Those weren't illegal. But they gave me other things. It was very popular in Europe for a while to get child pornography sandwiched between very regular, mundane pornography. These guys didn't have the brains to pull that stuff out.

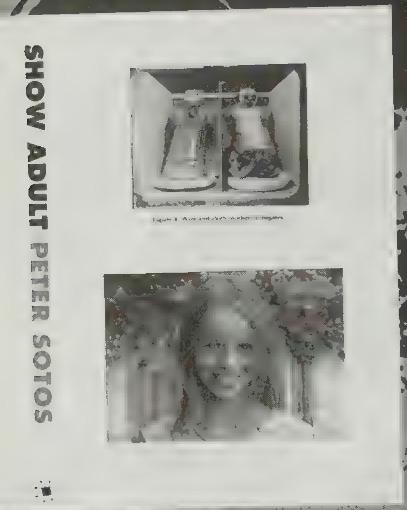
What were the actual charges brought against you?
The charges when I was first arrested were huge. Over three years we got them whittled down. They wouldn't plea bargain. They were adamant that I go to jail. The story I was told was that the cops kept reading Pure and saying that they really hate me, they really can't stand me, they want nothing to do with me.

The whole thing in Tool with this cop telling me he picked up bodies really happened. These people who dealt with incredible scum, incredible carnage. Dealing with prostitutes that they had gotten to know, and picking up their corpses. Dealing with people who had mutilated little kids. They thought that I was the worst case they had ever dealt with. This is what they were telling me. It didn't make me feel I was evil, it made me feel that these guys were that pathetic, and that there's not a chance in hell that they could help anyone even if they wanted to. That's how stupid these cops are.

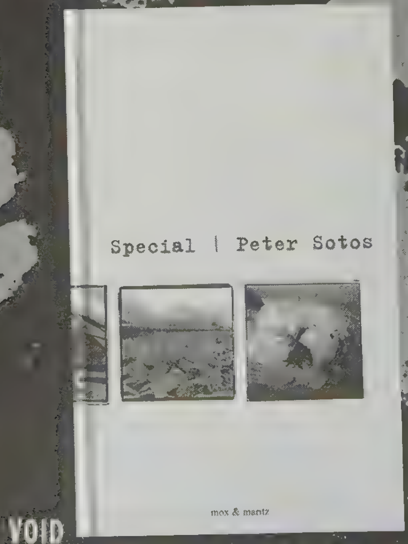
They even put my picture on television, along with the cover of Pure 2, which was a photocopied close-up of a little girl's vagina being forced open. They broadcast child pornography and threw me in jail. Ridiculous.

What was your jail stay like?
I had the wherewithal to actually have a swastika on the key chain that I used to carry around. When I was arrested, and in jail, of course every black cop and every Jewish cop had to see it. They quickly

Previous page: Cover for French edition of *Index*, 'Self Portrait' by Floria Sigismondi.



BUYER'S MARKET



announced their nationality. And they went on to explain to every con in the place what I was there for. They were very aware of the situation.

The truth is I have nothing in connection with that sort of stuff. All the different cops that dealt with me were usually black and were very aware of the situation. They handcuffed me the wrong way. They told cops to knock me down the stairs.

Were you actually knocked down the stairs?
It got pretty rough, but I wasn't knocked down the stairs. If anything, I mean, I'm white, regardless apparently of what I did, although it certainly didn't help things. Being white with all these fucking niggers is not going to help me.

timeless
special Peter SOTOS

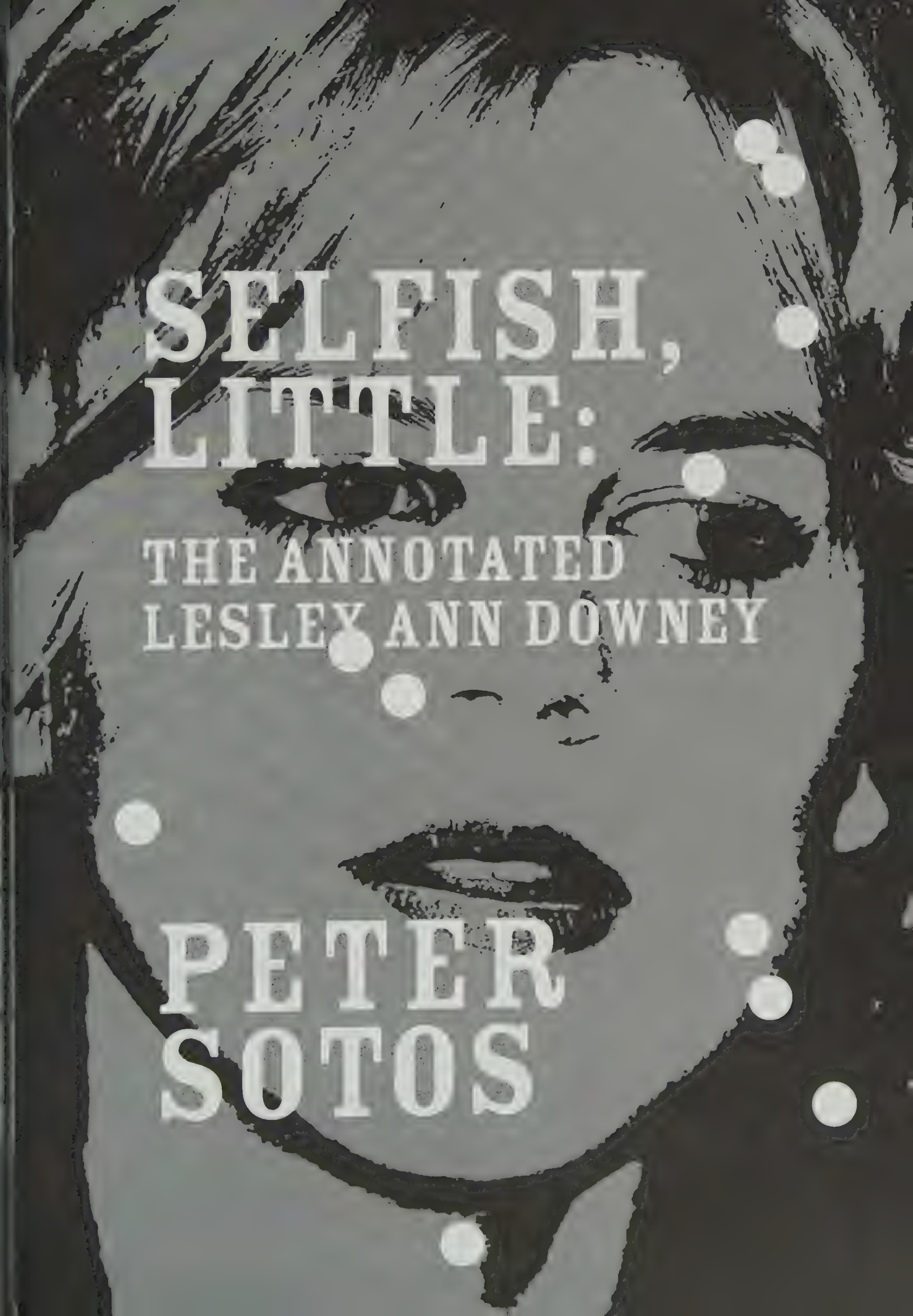
Were you held for a period of time?
Yeah, I couldn't come up with that fucking money. Actual jail was just a few days. You're actually put in a cell and then you have a full day where you're in a holding cell where they can bail you out, you're not put in the actual prison population.

I was removed from the holding cell where you wait for bonding, and put into the prison population right away. The cops really wanted to put the fear in me right away, trying to get me to confess, trying to get me to tell them where all the bodies were hidden.

Were any of the other people you wrote to questioned?
They went through every letter, every phone call I made, with a fine-toothed comb. Old friends would sign letters in campy ways and the police made something huge about someone calling me 'dear'. Everyone was questioned. It's amazing all the trouble I caused.

A friend's shop in Sweden was closed down. A record shop here in Chicago I used to buy records at was closed down. They questioned those people. They went to friends' houses in Germany, Belgium and Italy. In England

From top: Creation Books' *Show Adult*; *Buyer's Market* CD compilation, AWB Recordings; Peter Sotos edition of *Timeless* magazine



SELFISH, LITTLE:

THE ANNOTATED LESLEY ANN DOWNEY

PETER SOTOS

they spoke with all sorts of people. It was ridiculous. It was really a big deal.

Some of the letters I got years later were these real nightmare stories. I had a friend down in Florida who moved to Atlanta and was followed. They had this whole map trying to find this guy.

When you think about people like the Green River Killer just running around killing and Peter does his little fanzine and...
Now you know why those people are getting away with it! The ineptitude is just grotesque. You hear these panic stories about some thirteen-year-old sacrificing babies, totally outlandish, no way it could be true, but to these cops, of course it's true. It's just amazing.

How did Parasite come about?
I tucked my tail between my legs during all this and quietly did what I do. It's not like Pure, it's something completely different. It's just something that I wanted to see again. This isn't my revenge after Pure or something. All the time I was off in-between I wasn't storing up, waiting for the big onslaught. Pure was what it was, Parasite is what it is. All the time in-between, I just dealt with it. It's just time to do something else.

With Pure you had people to focus on, and their actions, and other crimes. Parasite is quite different.
To be perfectly honest, I don't think Parasite is for everybody. I think a lot of people who look at this stuff as an example of what's going on, who are looking for some sort of social commentary would be hard pressed to find it after the initial issue or two. I think that stuff might work in an art context but it doesn't really work in subscription context, which is why I like it.

I'm not teaching people anything. I'm not, "Oh what do I do now to shock or to explain my situation?" It's more of a celebration or investigation into specific acts, to keep those sorts of things going, to see where it leads. It's not to condescend or to make some cheesy argument.

There's not so much a focus on individual killers, but on other people's investigations and writings.

With Pure, I would take all the available information and make it into a story. I never explain who these people are. If I make a mention of Robin Gecht, I just figure the audience for Parasite will know who that is.

Do you have any 'heroes' today?
I don't have any heroes.

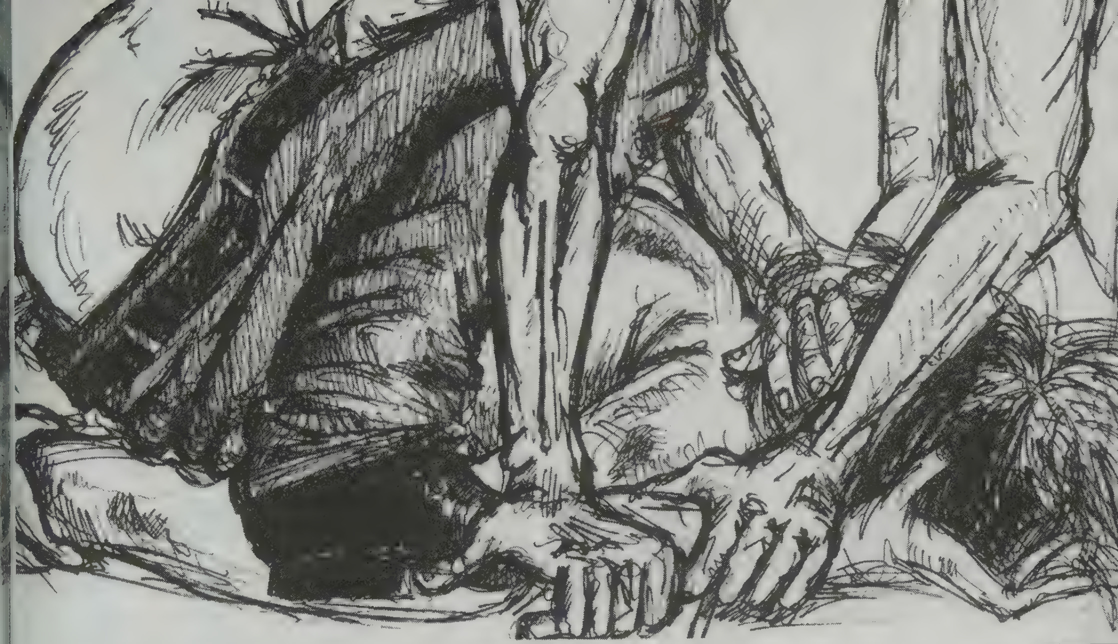
You like Dennis Cooper.
Oh yeah. I admire his work. If you go back to his early poetry books, he's got pictures of Gacy's victims on the cover of Tenderness of the Wolves. That was 1985 when that came out. He's always sort of been there with that stuff. Oh yeah, I'm a huge fan of his. I just try to extract what I'm interested in, like anyone does.

Who do you find especially impressive?
Ian Brady. The fact that the crime against Lesley lives on through her mother's continued implosion is terribly entertaining. Things like that have very little to do with the person after a while. So I don't want to say these people are my heroes. You tap into what these people have done and use them for your own means.

Ian Brady's crimes are an incredible source of continuing entertainment. Also the Thompson/Venables case and the killing of little James Bulger. Robert Black. Fred West. Ken and Barbie in Canada. Dodd.

Have you ever corresponded with any of these killers?
No, absolutely not. I don't want to make these people into something they are not. Those books of letters to Gacy are really amazing. These people by and large are complete idiots. Finding out about the weather in Manchester is an incredible waste of time. I have no interest in that stuff. There's nothing to be gained by that.

I'm a big fan of material that's available. Material that's everyday. Material that's considered banal by all these shock horror fans, these people who expect me to be some goremeister sadist. The stuff that is easily available to the public is well worth using, and getting the most out of.



Is there anything out there today that you feel delivers what you want?
Yeah, absolutely. It's great. There's more and more stuff. Oddly enough it's not the stuff that gets all this attention like Jeffrey Dahmer and all these outrageous crap maniacs.

The real pleasure, the real excitement, these days, is in feminist literature. It's true. If you've ever read Andrea Dworkin, and even Catharine MacKinnon's Only Words, things that are hardly salacious, the impact of those books is incredibly brutal, really viciously minded, very entertaining.

There are other people who are doing the actual crimes that produce very good books, but as far as the whole mind-set goes, I don't think the feminist stuff can be beat.

Do you have any sort of preference for your sex partners?
Absolutely not. The situation is important. The person is important as to what's going on at the time. If it's a female at the time, that's important, but I don't look for the perfect individual. I have no aesthetic interest in that at all.

As far as the whole thing about it being a hole, I don't think that it's all one big hole. I think everything is very individual. A man is a situation in a different way than a woman is than a prostitute is. There are all sorts of guys who are out looking for hookers who fulfill a fantasy ideal. Placing a woman on a pedestal and for the right price they become touchable and they can live out their fantasy. That's not what I'm interested in.

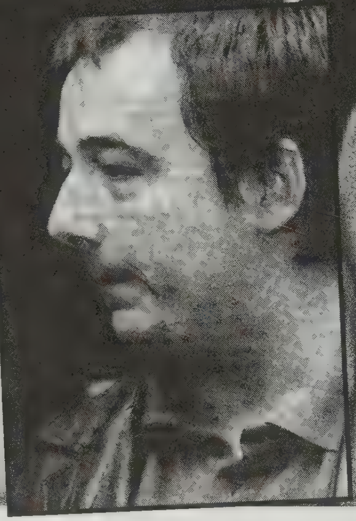
I don't have any ideal. The truth is, at least in Chicago, most of the prostitutes are black and cracked-out. Total zombies. I find that much more attractive.

Do you experience any sense of power when paying someone for sex?
That's fine for textbook definitions. That's fine for what they understand as power. To me that is not understanding power. My aim isn't towards power. I don't believe in that sort of stuff. I'm not trying to prove myself in any of those situations. I don't need to explain myself to anybody. The truth is that all those things just seem to me to be just words and descriptions, convenient psychological garbage.

This whole S&M trip that's based on the slave and the master and the power and the powerless and someone who gives up power and how does this work in this sort of philosophical sense is all just playing. I couldn't give a rat's ass for slave and master games and how power works.

If Brian Dugan takes a little girl from her bicycle on a dirt road and throws her in the back seat and tortures her until she dies, I don't think that the attraction to the whole event has anything to do with explanations,

Peter Sotos sleeve artwork for the Whitehouse Still Going Strong b/w Ankles And Wrists 7" single.



examples, of power. Because the little girl is so helpless, does that add to the situation? No one has to explain this, it's a given. Because he's stronger than the girl, because he's able to control her life and bring about her death or act as god? I don't think that's power. Those are all just games.

I think it's what was important at the time. It's probably something much more base. It's probably something he didn't control, something that he was victim to. But not something that I wholly disagree with.

Do you feel that most people reading true crime novels are seeking what you're giving?
I don't know. Statistics show that most of the buyers of true crime are housewives. My intention is to be as specific as possible, I'm just trying to get the most out of a situation and there might be other people who share that.

If people feel they're missing something in these books and they'd like to read Parasite, hopefully they'll get some of that. I'm certainly not going to be telling them, "this is what you're dealing with." It's just a way to tie the threads together. It's not didactic.

How many people have you encountered through your projects that you feel share your mind-set in some degree?
There's quite a few actually, all in different ways, and that's a very good thing. There's people who will say the right thing at the right moment that leads to other things. It's not a 'pals-y' type newsletter where you've got strength in numbers or someone to share your problems with. It usually sparks something else, a different area of interest. That's the best scenario.

I have quite a few friends who are intelligent enough to have their own interests.

Do you feel someone who may be likely to kill or cause harm could be triggered by violent videotapes?
I don't know, you'd have to ask them. I certainly don't. I've seen Guinea Pig, I think it's horrible, it's boring. I think most gore movies are boring. Especially ones that tend to focus on the gynecological aspects of the crime. It's always held at arm's length given those situations. They just bore me to tears.

If you're looking for something that's got more kick to it, I would suggest something like Salò, where you know the director is actually putting people through their paces. He's got all sorts of different rationalizations and convenient artisms and things that he wants to pay lip service to, but the truth is, given Pasolini's history and what you know his tastes were, you've got them in the film. I think that's much more geared to that sort of sentiment then maybe what you're suggesting. I think those things are much more salacious. Much more brutal.

PCism is so concerned with violent media creating violence in its audience. Have you found any killers that have actually committed their crimes because they saw a movie or listened to a rock song?
Again, they're concerned with other people. All my life I've never been that way. I don't know, I've never associated myself with sheep. If it's possible that the wrong sort of movie is going to make someone act the wrong sort of way, how could I answer? I'm not interested in the lowest common denominator, which is what PCism is. Everyone's concerned about perhaps this stuff going wrong and affecting someone the wrong way. I have no interest in those people, it's best to avoid them.

Do I think that pornography can make someone desensitized to rape? These feminist arguments? Quite honestly, I hope

Cover of Void Books release of Sotos' *Comfort and Critique*.

it's true. It doesn't interest me as far as someone I'd want to associate with.

If someone sees the December 1984 issue of Penthouse featuring photos of an Asian woman in bondage, hanging, with her head lolling to one side mimicking death, and it gives someone the wrong idea, then so be it.

Back when I was a kid, twelve years old, and Alice Cooper's School's Out came out, and he was getting incredible amounts of shit for hanging himself on stage. If someone gets the wrong idea, if someone wants to hang themselves because they saw Alice Cooper do it—well, whatever. I mean, they're shooting abortion doctors. I don't know about those people and I have no interest in them. I can't be worried about them.

When did you begin your investigations in sexuality?

By the time I was in puberty I had no idea what my sexuality was. You didn't have time to fine-tune everything, figure out what's going on. To figure out what you really want and what you didn't want. I think that's what puberty is by its very nature.

You're just sort of fumbling and groping, and then you have that realization afterwards. You look down and it really is repulsive. Whether it's a glory hole, or your wife's mouth, you're sort of grunting in a very silly way.

You give yourself over to the moment. You watch the spit from your dick to their mouth. You know the cum's gonna run out of your asshole and smell really horrible. There are all these things afterwards that really sort of put you in your place and you realize this is not something that you consciously want to spend your time doing.

You really have to go to these glory holes, to really sort of sense that. On a very mundane level you know that it's the worst blowjob you've ever had in your life, where they're scraping you with their teeth and stuff. The situation cannot be pleasurable outside of this weird psychology that's going on. That's what you have to focus on because the actual physical part is just dreadful.

I think you get to a certain age where that's over, where you don't think that way. That's what sort of attracts me to this whole idea of AIDS. You can walk by the brothel for a legitimate reason and then feel absolutely powerless, you're compelled to go in. I think that's a very useful sort of thing. You can't really pick apart the situation.

All too often, I hear people talk about sexuality and everything, their own sexuality, expressing their sexuality. They don't realize they've only investigated it halfway. As if you need to rid yourself of these things. All it takes is a very simple inspection. You know the situation. You can easily rid yourself of it, it's not like you have to. It's just a very simple thing.

Are you aware of the Mike Diana situation in Florida?

From my understanding about that situation, he must've had the worst lawyers in the world. First of all to get dunned for obscenity is just pathetic. With my own trial, they

Rude Shape Books release of *Special*

dropped the obscenity charge as soon as they could, because it's impossible to win most of the time. They tried to get Mike Diana on obscenity charges for his silly drawings of dismembered people and chainsaws. They're just lunatics down there.

It's like Canada, you have to move from these places. If Florida is that repressive, then you really do have to move. If you live in Canada where you can't even get regular movies, you can't live under that sort of stuff. If you live in Florida you have to move. If you look at Mike Diana's stuff, it's very silly. I find it embarrassing that he has had these problems.

It wasn't even mass published. It doesn't seem like it's worth paying attention to.
Have you seen Angelo's drawings? He lives in France. The stuff is technically just wretched. The drawings are so bad. They're incredibly misogynistic. They're just so brutal. Just sticking hammers and things inside every orifice. It's just incredibly brutal and yet this guy goes along scot-free.

I have a catalog from Le Scarabée d'or in Paris. They have books on every perversion. They even had a necrophilia book. They present everything in a nice clean-cut way.
The store is cleaner than anything. It's a very antiseptic place. It's a very small shop. It's just like a gay bookstore in a lot of ways. It's almost anally clean.

Do you think you might have had a different level of interest in situations if you had grown up in Paris?
I don't know about genes and all that stuff, I really don't know about biology. The stuff that interests me has never been overground. All my life I have always come across S&M stuff. And as I grew older and investigated the actual people it always just left me very cold.

The French stuff is very arty. Especially French. You'll find the Germans are actually closer to the bone. First of all, those people are just shit-obsessed. It's amazing how many shit films you'll find over there.

And the Nitsch aesthetic. I feel Hermann Nitsch and Günter Brus are really reacting to very similar tastes. Nitsch really desperately wants the corpse of a young boy to eviscerate in a very ritualistic way. He's got all these cheesy ideas of catharsis and religion, which to a certain extent are interesting, but they really take away from what's going on.

It really wouldn't matter where I grew up, I've always been aware of my tastes. I'm really quite happy being American.

Why do you continue to frequent glory holes and prostitutes if you've already discovered what's there?
I don't know that I do, quite honestly. Especially now with AIDS. I think that anyone that goes to those things would be a greater victim than anything. Especially with prostitutes you walk away and you can only imagine the incredible danger you put yourself in. I think there's myriad ways to enjoy those things without compromising yourself.

I do think that you do integrate this stuff. I don't think that all this stuff should be reduced to cumming in your hand or in some fucking hole. The act as far as biological function is of no importance.

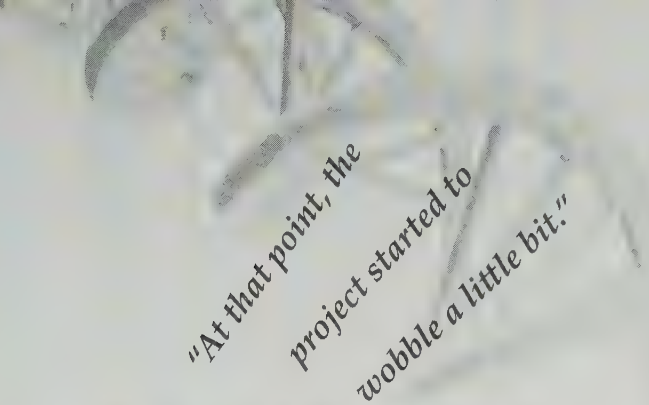
What would it actually take to satisfy Peter Sotos?
I'm a great fan of what goes on. It's not unrequited. It's not desperate. It's not lonely. I think all this stuff is very much in tune with what you see and how you breathe and how you live your life.

I really like this sort of stuff. The way it fits into my day. It doesn't mean stealing kids off porch steps or kneeling in front of glory holes. Anything from the sublime to the ridiculous to the mundane. I just think this stuff is incredibly integrated. I think that if you've got what you can consider a sadistic personality, sadistic in the way Krafft-Ebing or whomever writes of it, I think it's just a very real way to live one's life.

It's the way you live, it's the way you see everything, the woman at the 7-11, or the fucking crack addict on the El train, or your mother that you haven't talked to in ages, or whatever it is. It runs through everything. The way you approach people in a job situation.

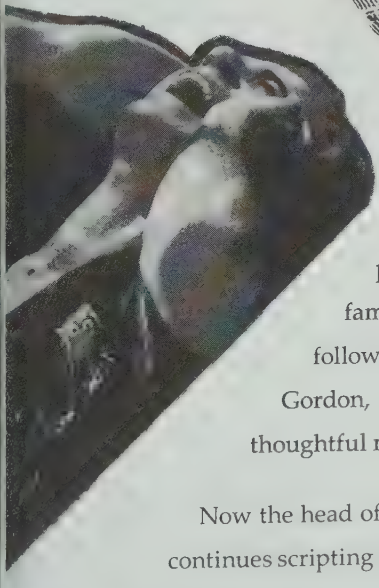
I'm really satisfied, all the time.

The collages used as background throughout this chapter are by Peter Sotos.



"At that point, the project started to wobble a little bit."

DENNIS PAOLI



Although not known as well by name as by the visual images he's put down on paper, Dennis Paoli is the author of one of the more famous horror classics, the amazing Re-Animator, and its follow-up From Beyond. Teaming up with longtime pal Stuart Gordon, Paoli's pen has given the world laughter and terror, thoughtful musings and deep-down revulsion.

Now the head of the Writing Center at New York's Hunter College, Dennis continues scripting and devising more ways to excite audiences with the written word made visual.

SHADE RUPE: How long have you been here at Hunter College?
DENNIS PAOLI: Twenty-two, twenty-three years, in one capacity or another. Full-time, part-time, teaching, administrating. I've lived in New York since 1971.

How did you meet Stuart Gordon?
I went to high school with Stuart in Chicago. We were college roommates at the University of Wisconsin, and after college he went to Chicago and was one of the founders, with Paul Sills and Story Theater, of what is now a serious Chicago theater movement, which at the time was two theaters on Lincoln Avenue.

I went to Europe for a year and then came back. New York is where the plane back from Europe lets you off, and I've been here ever since. We did work together in the 70s and 80s on a couple of theater projects, because we knew each other, and we had worked together from our time in high school in a satirical comedy group.

Stuart Gordon and Dennis Paoli at the Brussels International Festival of Fantastic Film.

That's why when you asked me before how long I'd been a professional writer, we were actually professional coffee house performers back in the 60s in Chicago, working as a comedy satire group at various coffee houses.

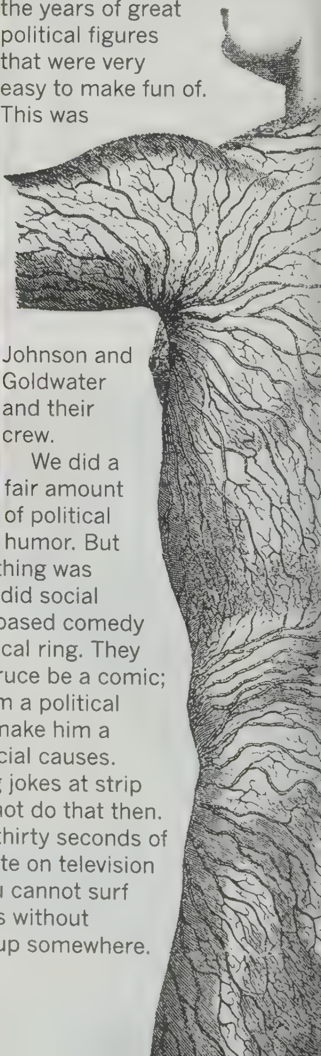
It was cool. That was back when folk music was at its peak. Josh White Jr. and The Irish Rovers and just some good people were playing clubs in Chicago, and we got to play with them. We were the 'other act.' Nowadays, you'd have stand-up comedians; in those days it was satire. Especially in Chicago, where Second City started.

You did political satire?
Some of it was very political, yeah. If you did comedy in Chicago at all, it was probably, to some degree, political comedy, because part of the heart of the Chicago experience is Chicago politics.

We did a number of Mayor Daley jokes. You couldn't do a half-hour set without a couple of Mayor Daley jokes. And once we got to college a lot of it got very political, very war-related. These were the years of great political figures that were very easy to make fun of. This was Johnson and Goldwater and their crew.

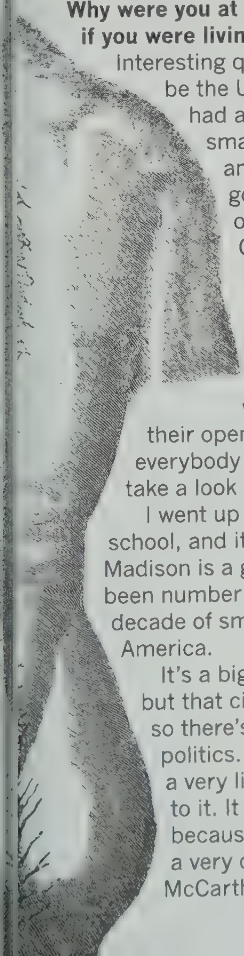
We did a fair amount of political humor. But in those days, everything was political humor. You did social humor and cultural-based comedy and it all had a political ring. They couldn't let Lenny Bruce be a comic; they had to make him a political figure. They had to make him a martyr to certain social causes. He started out doing jokes at strip clubs. You couldn't not do that then.

Now that there's thirty seconds of stand-up every minute on television somewhere, that you cannot surf the array of channels without finding some stand-up somewhere. It's easier now.



Did your group have a name?
It's embarrassing now, but it was clever at the time. We were called The Human Race. We actually got a following. We actually had people who would come to a couple of the clubs we played just to see us—well, not just to see us. But they knew us, and they would come to see us, and who else was there.

It was cool, it was fun. And then we took it with us to college. We didn't quite do college tours, but we did play. We went to Wisconsin, so we played in a couple of coffeehouse clubs in Wisconsin. We played a few other university dates, college dates around the Midwest. When we would go back to Chicago over the summer, we would do a coffeehouse somewhere there. That's how Stuart and I started, out of high school and into theater.



Why were you at the University of Wisconsin if you were living in Chicago?
Interesting question. It wasn't going to be the University of Wisconsin. I had already signed up at a much smaller college. I was a math and physics major, and I was going to go to a small college outside of Chicago, Knox College, that specialized in math and physics-related studies.

Stuart was going to Wisconsin, and it was one of my backup schools, and we decided to go to one of their open houses where they invite everybody in the area up to come and take a look at the school.

I went up and took a look at the school, and it's gorgeous, it's beautiful. Madison is a great place to live. It has been number one several times in the last decade of small cities in which to live in America.

It's a big university in a small city, but that city is also a state capital, so there's a lot going on, a lot of politics. It's a state university with a very liberal, radical background to it. It also has very sharp politics, because in many respects it's a very conservative state. Joe McCarthy was a senator from Wisconsin. So it had a lot of life to it. If you go there in the summer, it's easy to like it. It's not as easy in January after it's been twenty-five below for two weeks in a row. But it's great, and in the summer it just looked terrific. It's a big school; it was 40,000 students. It was full of New Yorkers. A lot of New Yorkers went there.

I remember all these farm kids from Wisconsin and these guys from Green Bay who all looked the same. I walked into an orientation session one time and everybody in the room was wearing penny loafers, with pennies in them, cut-off jeans, Madras shirts and belts, the whole routine. I walked in with kids from Chicago, with a white-on-white snap-tab collar shirt, black pants so tight the hair on my legs came through; Puerto Rican shoes, fence-climbers, shoes with the zip-pointed toes and the slanted heels; and we all looked at each other and went 'this is going to be interesting'. And it was. By the time of 69, when we all got out, we all looked the same. We all had bell bottoms on, we all had long hair, bandannas and tie-dyed shirts. It was that diversity, that difference, that was so attractive.

I decided I didn't want to go to a small, homogenous place—a place defined by homogeneity. Also, I ended up not into the sciences. The sciences, as fascinating as they are, and I still try to keep up, have a certain homogeneity there, too. Not of a type of person, but of focus, of what you're doing. You're often a number of people working on the same kind of project, toward the same end, running the same experiment or set of experiments, looking for the same thing.

So I ended up in the liberal arts, which was everybody looking for whatever it was they were looking for. I just found that more attractive, more interesting.

What drew you to the horror genre? Had you always been a fan?
I got into horror because it was fun. I got into horror movies when I was a kid. One, because they were scary, two, because they were funny.

If a horror movie doesn't work, it's hilarious. Godzilla is wonderful. The monster turned into the friendly neighborhood Godzilla, who was the hero fighting Gamelan, or whoever Godzilla got to fight. It's so goofy, it becomes charming. But if it works, it's entirely the flipside of that: it's terrifying.

There were many ways to go with horror movies, and there were so many horror movies being made when I was a kid. Remember, those were the days when you went to a theater, you always saw two movies. Nobody went to see *a* movie. You went to see a double feature. Only if you went downtown to the big movie theaters did you go to see *a* movie.

But if you went in the neighborhood, you always saw two movies. The chances were very high that one of those movies was going to be a horror movie, because they were the B-movies that were being cranked out. So you were almost always assured of having a horror movie to go see.

Did you get to see a lot of witch and Satanic movies?

Yeah, a fair amount of that. It's funny that Jim Carrey's The Mask is out now. There was a movie called The Mask back then, which was really horrible. It wasn't a William Castle movie, but it was one of the first ones they made you sign something when you came in the door, indemnifying them against your terrible death from fright.

The theater had a nurse, or some actress in a nurse costume, standing there at the door, which was part of the fright technique, but it actually was an awful movie, awful in both senses. It was an awful, terrible, not very well made movie, but there was something at the core of it that was really sickening, really revolting, in the best horrific sense. So there were gems like that that popped up, out of your movie-going experience.

And then how do we get into horror now? How is it that we make horror movies? The way you break into making movies in Hollywood, if you go the low budget route, is to make low-budget comedies or low-budget horror movies. Again, it's the two sides of the same experience. The funny side and the terrible side. Screaming is [illegible] just like laughing. They're both releases of tension, they're just different psychological formats.

Stuart was always a great comedy director, his strength was always comedy. Most of his theater in Chicago was comic theater, and great comic theater. He also has a very strong narrative sense; a lot of his theater in Chicago was translating novels or short stories onto the stage.

But the idea that he had, that he got connected with the producer of Re-Animator for, was a Lovecraft idea. He was looking around through fiction looking for a strong narrative, and he found Lovecraft. Now, I don't normally think of Lovecraft as strong narrative. Lovecraft is more [illegible]. He's shooting for a certain [illegible] his prose to have an effect on [illegible] as opposed to the story to [illegible] through. But if you read the Herbert West—Reanimator stories, they do have this propulsion. They plow forward, more than a lot of his other, more atmospheric tales.

These stories appealed to Stuart; they hadn't been widely read in a long time, and they certainly hadn't been shot. There is a history of Lovecraft movies, but these were fairly obscure and certainly we were not aware and are still unaware of any attempt to make them into a film [illegible].

Stuart asked me to [illegible] stories. I was in New York [illegible] Norris, a very talented [illegible] director in Chicago, with [illegible] Stuart on these stories. They [illegible] out as half-hour scripts [illegible] series of stories.

At the time, a lot of network [illegible] syndication entities, were looking for short series, horror series to put on television. There were a bunch [illegible] them. We were thinking about [illegible] that first and Bill wrote the first half-hour version. In the sort of [illegible] television executive programming, the word came down through [illegible]

David Gale as Dr. Carl Hill's head in *Re-Animator.*

press that what everybody was looking for was one-hour, not half-hour shows; it was easier for syndicated stations to plug an hour into their schedule, rather than a half hour.

So then we expanded it to an hour. I did the expanding of the script, working with Bill long distance; I was doing the re-writes in New York. And then Brian Yuzna saw the hour-long script, as I recollect the process.

How did the script reach Brian?
You got me. I don't know how scripts get to the people they get to. I now have an agent, so I have a better idea of how scripts get to the people they get to. But the fact is I've been at Fangoria conventions, and people have come up to me and asked me to sign scripts that they have. I ask them, "How did you get this script? How did you get this version of Body Snatchers? I'm not even sure I have a copy of that version of the script anymore."

I have no idea how scripts get around. Somewhere in some alley in L.A., someone's got a photocopier and is cranking out early versions of scripts.

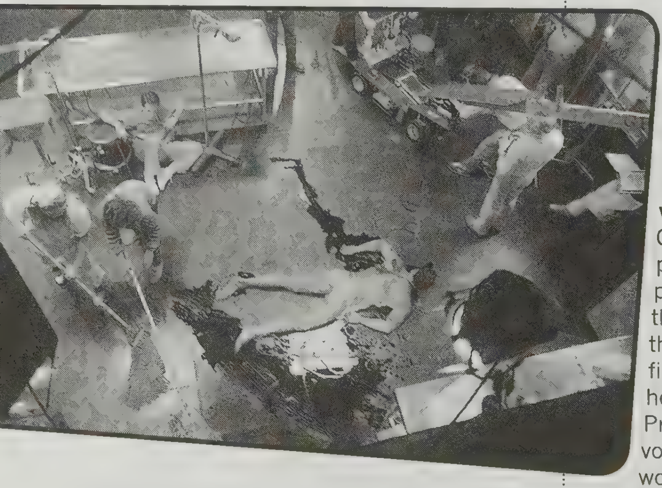
However he got it, Brian read the script. Brian is a true believer. Brian is an unpretentious lover of the horror genre, and has a connection to it and an understanding of it that is rare, even among lovers of the genre.

He dug the script. He really liked it a lot and wanted to see it made, to back this as a feature, but needed to put another half hour on it. So this is how scripts get made. You paint this little corner, and then you paint that corner, and then you connect the dots. When you're done, you cut it down to something that will actually work.

We were writing the script by telephone at several points, right before they started shooting, and I think even after they started shooting, which is not uncommon. There are stories about de Souza getting called up for lines for Die Hard. They stopped shooting, to call him up and ask him for a line. That's part of a writer's job.

Were you aware that this was a project that was most likely going to be developed in a creative way?

I had already written a script for somebody else. It's a classic Hollywood story. Greg Martinelli had made an award-winning short, ended up in New York, and wanted to make movies.



We wrote a script, a low-budget thriller, a gritty urban drama about a priest involved in some murders. The first version was written in 1979. I just looked at the back of the script, and the first mimeographed version was from 1979.

It was sold to the Plitts, a family who owned theatrical houses in the Midwest; they wanted to get into production. We were in the first three movies they were going to make, and they ended up not making the movie.

Then it was optioned by several different television producers, who ended up not making it. We had rewritten it for television from the standard three-act format, into the seven-act 'here's where your commercials go' format. After being optioned five different times it lay there for a couple of years until some producer who had a contract at U.S.A. Cable called up.

Cable had opened up then. The producer had optioned it for Blake Edwards before, and came back and optioned it for U.S.A. Cable. Thirteen years after the script was written, it was finally made into Mortal Sins, with Christopher Reeve, for U.S.A. Cable a few years ago. They also released a video version.

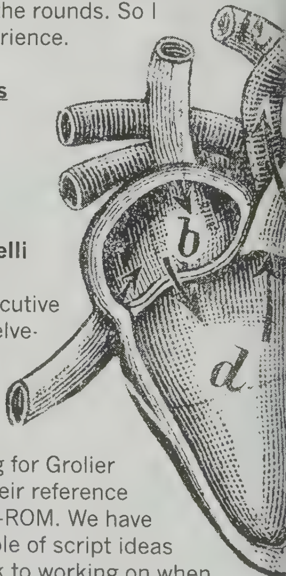
I had also written another project with Greg that was making the rounds. So I had screenwriting experience.

So Mortal Sins was written before Re-animator?

Uh-huh.

Is Greg Martinelli writing now?

Greg is now executive producing a twelve-part series on the history of the American film, and he's also working for Grolier Press, putting their reference volumes onto CD-ROM. We have worked on a couple of script ideas that we'll get back to working on when we get a chance.



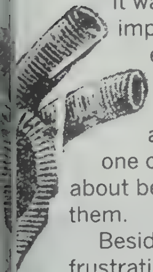
So I already had scriptwriting experience. That's one of the reasons Stuart called me, aside from the fact that we had already worked together on Bleacher Bums by this time, a play about the Chicago Cubs. It's a comedy based on actual experiences in the bleachers at Wrigley Field, done from improvisations by one of the most extraordinary companies of actors you're likely to find.

Almost all of them are in Hollywood now. There was Dennis Franz, now in NYPD Blue, Joey Mantegna, Meschach Taylor from Dave's World and Designing Women; although he wasn't in that show, he was in that company. Jack Wallace who was the head human in

These pages: On the set of *Re-Animator.*

The Bear, and who worked for David Mamet, was in that company. An extraordinary group of actors leading up to very talented people who are all working around the country.

I had already worked with them and came in as a writer with them and as a cocreator of that piece. That play is running now. It's run in Chicago four different times. It was the longest running play in L.A. for a while, it ran for eight or nine years.



Every six months I get a little check, along with everybody else in the company, because they're all technically the authors since it was developed from improvisations. And everybody gets this little check from Bleacher Bums. It's a living project. It's one of the great things about being a writer. One of them.

Besides all the frustrations, there are certain remunerations. One of them is having been connected with several projects that have lives of their own. It's having created something. It's created life. Created projects that have lives independent of you. I don't even know where Bleacher Bums is being performed, but I will get a statement from Samuel French every year that tells me where all the productions were done.

It's remarkable. They're done all over America and internationally. And Re-Animator. I'll have people come up to me and say, "Oh, you wrote Re-Animator." It's happened in the concession line at Yankee Stadium. It's great to be connected with a couple of projects that actually have touched the popular imagination so that they have lives of their own, and that people consider them independent of their creator or author. That's a terrific reward. When you're totally forgotten and the project lives, that's your best reward.

Were you aware at all, as you were writing, that these projects would be successful?

RE-ANIMATOR

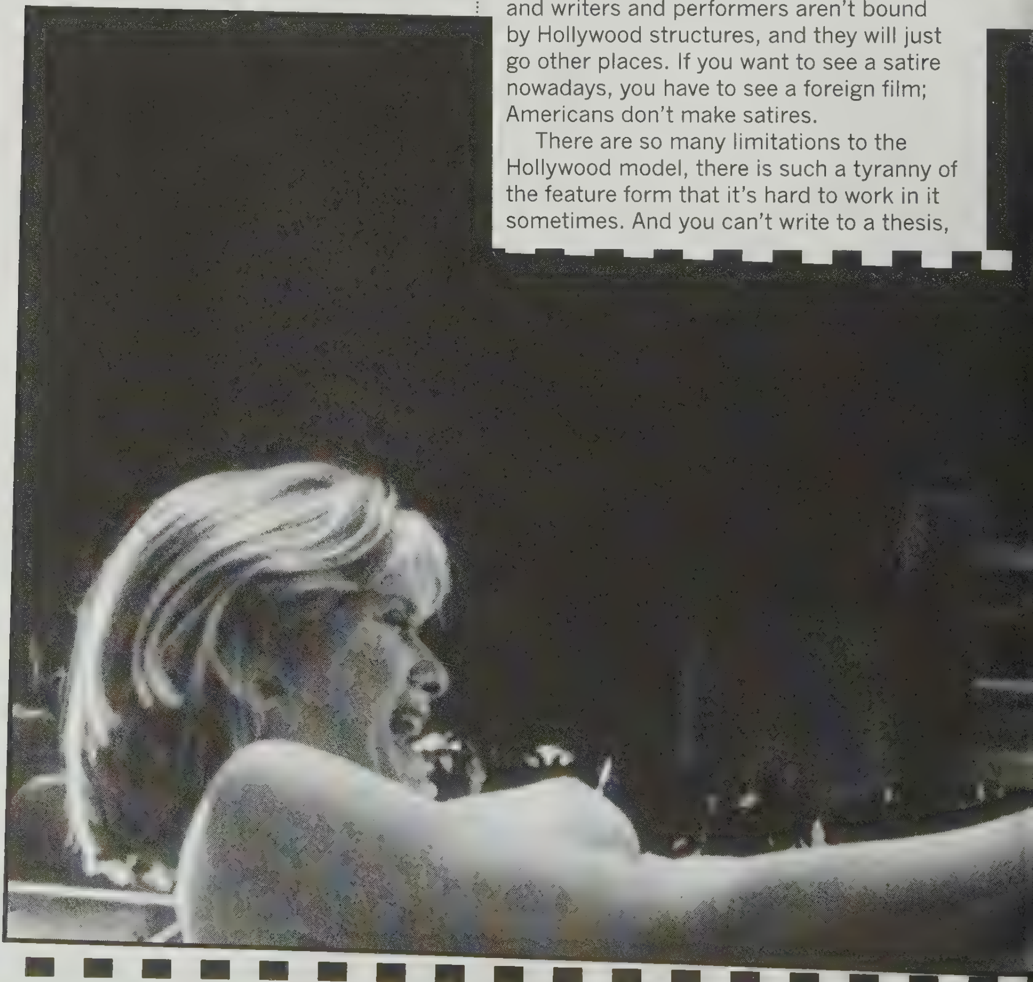
No, you're never aware of that, just as you're never aware that it's not. You're not doing it for that reason. You're trying to create those characters, you're trying to create a coherent, narrative logic. You're trying to find irony, you're trying to discover importance. You're trying let the characters talk back to you.

You usually know it's working for you when the characters tell you what they want to do. If you're making the characters do this because you have to get from this crisis to that catastrophe, that's obviously going to be a problem. The audience probably isn't going to follow because the character doesn't have to get there. Then it becomes a mechanical process.

I've found myself lately wanting to go see foreign films more and more, because when I go see Hollywood product, I'm seeing a mechanical process. I can see at a certain point that if the writer made that decision, then only these two or three things can happen, and within five minutes I know which of those are going to happen. At that point, you start watching the performers perform, you start watching the DP's work, you start watching other things besides the story. You become alienated from the heart of the movie.

Foreign films don't necessarily have to follow that structure. They are not constrained by the same laws of economics that Hollywood movies are. Foreign directors and writers and performers aren't bound by Hollywood structures, and they will just go other places. If you want to see a satire nowadays, you have to see a foreign film; Americans don't make satires.

There are so many limitations to the Hollywood model, there is such a tyranny of the feature form that it's hard to work in it sometimes. And you can't write to a thesis,



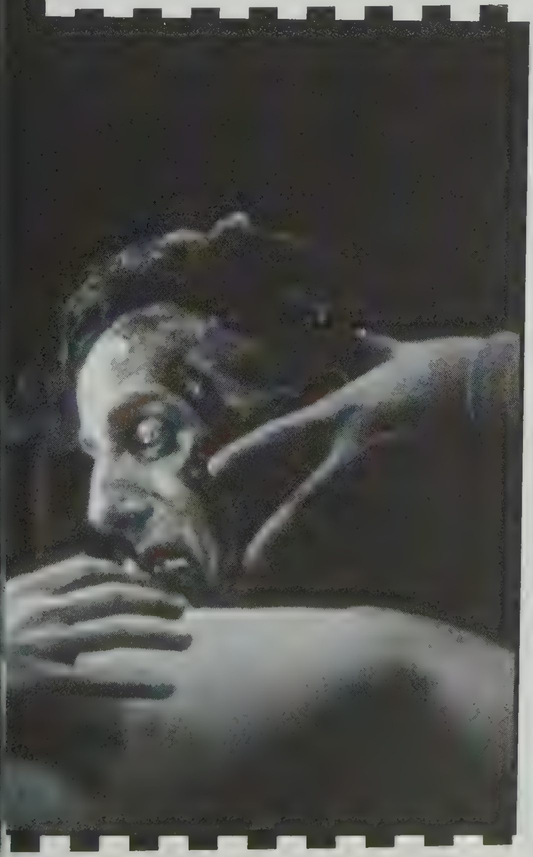
'Giving head' takes on new meaning in *Re-Animator*.

but you do have to write from conviction, and that can be difficult given the necessities of the Hollywood process.

It's easier working in a low-budget format, but even there there is a necessity to create a 'product', because it's going to go to the video market. Because the film is going to go through a video distributor who is probably connected to a major studio or major corporate entity. Somewhere along the line, you are pleasing an institution, as opposed to a viewer. And that leads to certain processes. That leads to certain strictures on your imagination.

I don't start out trying to do this, but I feel that I have done my job on a script if a producer or an executive looks at it and says, "Oh, we can't do that." I've crossed the line and I've found the limits of what we'll be allowed to do on that project.

It's at the limit where you create that tension that has to be released either with a laugh or a scream. In our best work, like Re-Animator, you get both at the same time sometimes. It's terrific when you walk that line where you're so scared it's funny, or where it's so funny it's scary. I love to live on that line, but it's a very hard place to be. It's a very hard place to find.



One of my favorite filmmakers, Richard Lester, didn't make horror films, but he was always on the line where slapstick turned into something dangerous. Till it actually hurts.

Re-Animator is peppered with great bits like where Herbert West has Dr. Gale's disembodied head wobbling on its gory neck in the pan. It's a horror scene to watch a dismembered head wobble. And it's comedy, because it keeps falling over, and then Herbert jabs the head on the spike of the spindle file to keep it from falling over.

Jeffrey came up with that himself. That's not written. A couple of the nicest things in Re-Animator were improvisations from the actors, and again, that's Stuart's work as a theater director. I think of that as the actor's job.

The writer is very jealous of his or her words, but it's also the writer's job to create a situation in which an actor has to find other things that will make the project better. That's why I wish the writer could be more a part of the process, but they are often kicked off the set.

I live in New York so I rarely can make it onto the set. Stuart's always asking me to come on the set, but it's hard for me to get out there. I have another job, another life. And in some ways it's good to be insulated from that, too. It gives you some perspective.

Film is a collaborative medium, and when everybody's doing their best work is when it comes out best. We hope to create in every script, and as Stuart hopes to create on every shoot, a situation in which the actors can find things to work with.

I'm thrilled when I see something that I have written interpreted differently from how I interpreted it, spoken in a different voice from the voice I heard in my head when I wrote it, but that works, that discovers something else in the line, in the part, in the situation that enhances the movie, that makes it better, that pushes it forward, that makes it jump off the screen. That's exciting. That's one of the rewards of working in a collaborative medium that you don't get as a writer in other areas.

Re-Animator had three screenwriters. Stuart was one, you were one. Were you all just bouncing ideas around?
By the time Re-Animator was being shot we were all in different places. Stuart was in L.A., Bill Norris was in Chicago and I was in New York. It wasn't a skull session. It wasn't three people pacing in a room bouncing ideas off of each other; it was a long-distance perspective. Everyone was looking through binoculars at this thing.

By the time Stuart was in pre production, I was doing most of the writing. Bill initiated the project and wrote the first half-hour version that we were talking about, and was involved in everything along the way. I was doing most of the actual writing, including writing it out. I was the next to the last filter before it got onto the set. In many ways it was a happy accident that it worked so well.

There's a dream sequence that was cut out of Re-Animator that I was appalled they didn't leave in. That was one of my favorite parts of the movie, but it's absolutely clear it doesn't work. It doesn't fit in the movie, it doesn't make the movie better. It's a nice little piece of work, I was very proud of it, but it will never be, and should never be, part of the movie, because it doesn't work in the movie.

Did they consult you first, or did they just cut it?
They cut it. That's not the writer's decision. The scene was shot. It looks great. Works like a charm.

Almost all the characters are in it; you think it's real but it turns out to be a dream. It didn't turn out to be important to the characters. You understood the characters perfectly well without it. It didn't have to be in the movie, so it ended up cut. Stuart tried the movie with it in, but it didn't work so they cut it out.

The writer is technically the first person off the project. You make it happen; it's not going to happen without a green-lighted script, but it's not your project once they start to shoot it. This is different for writers in England and for a lot of writers who work in a lot of different places.

If I'm working with Stuart or other people I know, where we share some sort of vision of the project, I don't care what they do with it.

How involved were you with Bride of Re-Animator?
I wrote an outline and started a script, but after that I was off the project and other writers came in and they technically could not use what we had done, so they didn't use our ideas. I liked a lot of what was in Bride of Re-Animator; there's some great stuff in it.

The great thing about Herbert West is there are a number of other stories in the Lovecraft saga that suggest a number of ways for the character to go. Fascinating character, Herbert West. And there are so many interesting ways to go that you almost can't go wrong with the character. And they got some really nice stuff out of it.

But it's not what we wrote. We had a different take on it. It's hard to compare it, because you can't. Until it's shot, you don't know what it really does. Until you hear an actor speak your lines, you don't know how it will really work.

There were certain ideas that Brian had that did end up in Bride, including the title—that shows Brian's respect for the genre, instead of titling the film Re-Animator 2. At that point I was working on three projects at the same time anyway. On some projects, it's just harder for people to work with a writer in New York. Ultimately, I had nothing to do with Bride of Re-Animator except for an abandoned early version of the script.

I did work on it, and I liked the work, and Brian liked the work. It wasn't that they didn't like the work. It's that the way that project was going to be done, they needed a writer in L.A.

It's interesting you say that it's hard to work with a New York writer but now you've done several Charles Band projects: Spellcaster, The Pit and the Pendulum, and Ghoulies II.

It is hard to work with a New York writer, because producers are always happier when they can hover over your shoulder, when they can call you into their office, and when they can take you to lunch. They're more comfortable doing those things than they are at waiting. I guess they feel like they're actually doing something when they are hovering, when they are meeting, and when they are having lunch. That constitutes doing something for a lot of producers.

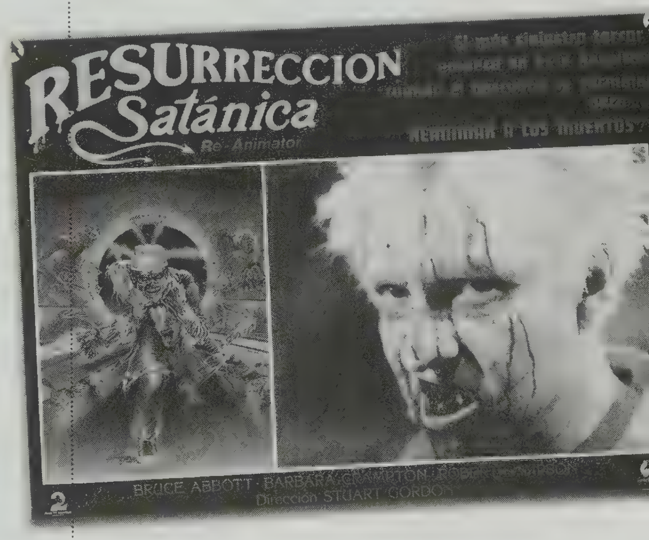
It is easier nowadays to hover and meet electronically than it was back when I was doing those other projects for Charlie. At the time, Charlie wanted to make "a thousand movies by the year 2000." I believe that was one of his slogans.

He was anxious to get as much product as possible and it could come from anywhere. Charlie could not keep track of the talented people he had working for him. Danny Bilson wrote The Rocketeer, and did The Flash for TV. His partner was Paul De Meo. They were working at Empire when I first got there. Really smart guys, really good work. Fred Smoller, smart guy, good director who was working there, doing very good work.

Ted Nicolau, who I believe still works for Charlie, is a smart guy and good director. I think he was a DP at the time. In an effort to make movies out of chaos, Charlie created this extraordinary cast. You can't be that chaotic and thrive in Hollywood. They won't let you, and you probably just can't.

Charlie works in a different way now. You couldn't do Spellcaster and Ghoulies II the way they were done now. Frankly, maybe they shouldn't have been done at all, but there was something in each of those projects that was cool.

That was enough for Charlie, to get something cool on the screen. I, personally, would like to make really good movies. When you've sat through a number of movies and there's nothing cool on the screen, sometimes it's enough just to see something cool.



We all do that today. We all sit around and go, "Oh, but it had that cool scene." And "Oh, I liked the lighting!" We're constantly justifying, and we'll go see Halloween VI, just because there's nothing else, as far as theatrically released movies in the U.S.

Let's go back to those B-movies from the 50s and early 60s. They were pretty atrocious, most of the Corman movies were pretty atrocious, most of the Hammer films were ultimate failures, but, boy, they had great stuff in them! Peter Cushing running across

Previous page: Coffee break during the shooting of *Re-Animator.*
This page: Mexican lobby card for *Re-Animator.*

the table and leaping and pulling those huge curtains down so that the sun would fall on Christopher Lee. Spectacular. One of the great vampire movie images of all time; and most of the movie is fairly turgid.

A lot of the Vincent Price movies like the original The Fly with a guy walking around with a Halloween costume on, but there is some great stuff in there. That ending, a classic ending. I still have a friend who calls me up every once in a while, and the first thing he says is "Herrrrrrrp me!" Great stuff.

What B-movies were for was to churn out great stuff, to give a screen medium for great stuff. There wasn't enough time, money, imagination or talent to make a great movie, but they were worth doing because it got to something real, and real impressive on the screen.

You don't have the B-movies anymore, but you've got the genre films, and hopefully what they get to is some of that great stuff. You'll settle for that for $3.50 at home, where you can sit on your couch and watch it. It's a lot harder to settle for that for eight bucks, but people aren't even getting that for their eight bucks anymore.

What amount of control do you and Stuart feel you have now? I saw Pit and the Pendulum, and at the beginning it seemed like it could be The Devils.

Isn't that a great first scene? That first scene in Pit and the Pendulum was almost entirely Stuart's idea. I ended up writing it and contributing to it, but that first scene is almost entirely Stuart's idea. And it was great. Originally Pit and the Pendulum had another half-hour of movie in the script. There was another character, a Moor, that we had to cut out.

We watched the first part of the Kevin Costner Robin Hood, where he and Morgan Freeman escape from the prison in the Holy Land, the Saracen prison in the Holy Land. We had that turned around entirely. That was the core of the original Pit and the Pendulum, the two characters, one of them being a Moor, escaping from an Inquisition prison in Spain.

Which I think is more politically charged, more culturally honest, and more high adventure. Because you spend some time with them, and it takes them a third of the movie to do it, as opposed to its introduction, so you can go off and make the Great White Hero out of Kevin Costner, who leads his people forward. All we need to defeat the forces of evil is to be right, though it wouldn't hurt to have gunpowder, too.

We were trying to do something that was more politically complex, and had more narrative complexity, and therefore adventure to it as well. And it ended up the budget fell apart and we had to cut a hunk of that out of the movie.

Which is real unfortunate, because there was a real big, exciting movie inside of The

Pit and the Pendulum. Originally they had Peter O'Toole to play Torquemada and Billy Dee Williams to play the Moor. It was way too ambitious a project. It's a huge costume drama on a massive scale, with a lot of dialog and dream sequences.

A lot of machinery, a number of effects, a large cast, and it was made for a small, small budget. I think what Stuart and the actors ended up bringing out of that was extraordinary. But it was an impossible task.

Do you work with storyboard artists?
Only in the sense that Stuart is a storyboard artist. When I met him in high school he was an art student. We went to technical high school, and the art students were the craziest. They were the beatniks and hippies. They were way out there.

Stuart is a very good artist. He's a terrific drawer, and a good sculptor, and a pretty good painter. Whenever we sit working together, I'm writing as he's drawing. He's not necessarily drawing storyboards, but he's drawing. A lot of what he draws translates into what I write.

I've seen him storyboard for himself, not that he actually does his own storyboards; it's another way that makes him as good a director as he is, because he can really communicate with storyboard artists because he could be one himself. Storyboard artists are very important to him.

Through him, you can say that I work with storyboard artists. He's inspired by artwork. A couple of years ago we went to visit Berni Wrightson outside of Woodstock because Stuart had hired him to do some drawings for a potential project. Stuart is very plugged in visually to every project that he does. He often sends me the storyboards when we

Previous page: Stuart Gordon lends a hand to David Gale on the set of *Re-Animator.*
This page: Lovecraft made flesh in *Re-Animator.*

are doing another draft or polish. So I have worked from storyboards, but mostly it's through Stuart.

When did you and Stuart start talking about doing another Body Snatchers?
Stuart was talking to Bob Solo, who produced the 1978 remake, and a successful remake it was, and it was decided it was time for a sequel. What attracted me to it was the fact that it I thought it was a fascinating joke to work on the sequel to a remake. In what other business do you get to do the work on the sequel to the remake?

That had a green-lit script, it was a 'go' project. They decided to polish it. They polished it to the point where they didn't like it anymore. They brought in a new writer, then argued about who the next writer was going to be after that one did some re-writes, and now it's a dead project. It will probably still get done at some point, considering it's in big-time turnaround. Millions of dollars have been invested in this movie already. So they probably have to do it to recoup at least some of that money.

Barbara Crampton stimulates Jeffrey Combs' gland in *From Beyond*.
Next page: Dennis Paoli, Los Angeles, 2010. Photo Shade Rupe.

At that point, the project started to wobble a little bit. Stuart was anxious to shoot it, and would have been happy to shoot almost any script that was based on our script, because there was some real good stuff in it. They originally said they just wanted to polish the dialog.

People lose perspective when you get into the middle of a project like that. They lose the knowledge that they should have had from the beginning that when you change one thing here, it changes something over there, which changes something out there, and then your third act doesn't work anymore.

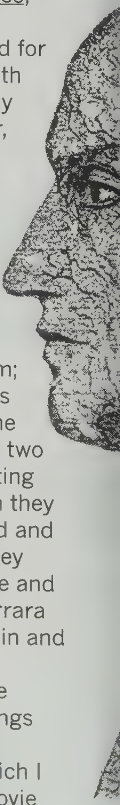
Another production company came along and asked Stuart to do Fortress, and he couldn't wait on Body Snatchers anymore. There was no clear path to production for Body Snatchers. So he accepted Fortress, and he went off to Australia.

Warner Brothers went out and looked for another director and wisely came up with Abel Ferrara, who fit the project in many key ways. He is a dark director, he's got a dark imagination, which this script had, from Larry Cohen's version on.

He is also an action director, and a B-movie director, in the best sense of that concept. He's truly a noir filmmaker. The original Body Snatchers was a noir film; it wasn't a horror movie. It was more in the noir genre than the horror genre. It's where those two crossed. They were really getting back to the roots of that when they hired Abel Ferrara. Every good and smart director has a writer they work with. Stuart has a couple and I'm one of them, and Abel Ferrara has Nick St. John, who came in and did some real good things.

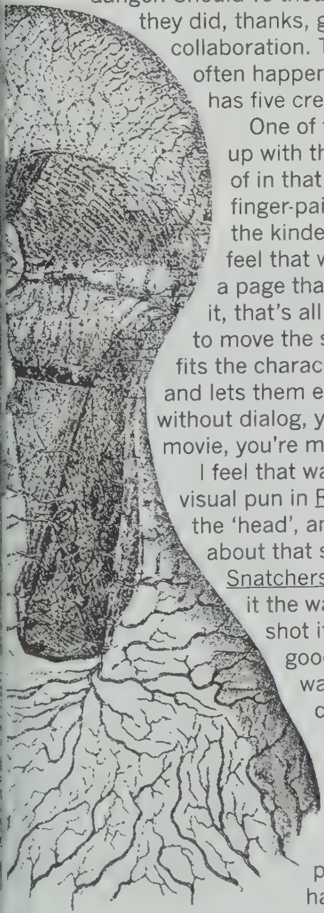
It's interesting to watch the movie, because they changed some things that I still to this day would not have changed. They changed the ending, which I would not have done. It had a horror-movie ending, and now it has an Abel Ferrara ending, which is a shoot-'em-up. Problems are solved by shooting guns, which was not the case with our script.

We had more of a horror-movie ending that fit more with some of the elements and the themes from earlier in the film. But it was fascinating to sit there and watch Nick



St. John solve some of the problems that we could never solve. We were always unhappy with the introduction of the whole idea of the body snatchers in the film. The scene in the bathroom in the service station at the beginning defines where they are, it defines where the army base is, it defines the whole problem. It sets up the character that you see later. It's definitive.

The best thing about it is that it's a simple idea. It fits naturally into what they're doing which is driving to this place, driving into danger. Should've thought of it, didn't, they did, thanks, good work. It's collaboration. This does not often happen in a movie that has five credited authors.

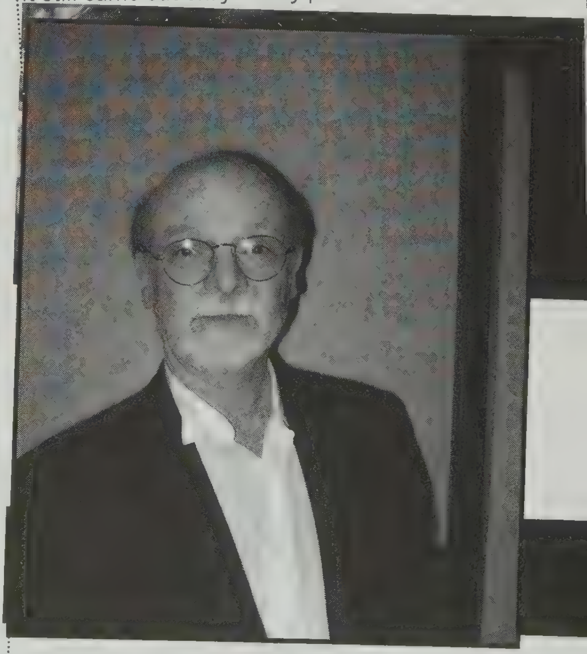


One of the things I came up with that I'm proudest of in that movie is the finger-painting scene in the kindergarten. I always feel that when I've written a page that has no dialog on it, that's all visual, that helps to move the story along, that fits the characters into the story and lets them express themselves without dialog, you're making a movie, you're making a film.

I feel that way about the visual pun in Re-Animator, with the 'head', and I feel that way about that scene in Body Snatchers. He didn't shoot it the way I saw it, but he shot it in an equally as good, if not better, way. It could have come out in the Hollywood process through which it came, which was pretty much a meat grinder process. It could have come out chopmeat, and it came out Grade A choice. He did a good job.

I thought it really defined a totally new way of making a movie like that. We do know the story. We know the body snatchers, we know the story.

It started out to be a sequel. And then after Larry Cohen's script had been written and my script had been written, the studio decided that the target audience was too young to have seen either of the earlier versions. So they decided they couldn't make a sequel to a movie that their target audience hadn't seen. So it was decided to make another remake. Which is not what we started out to make at all. So they changed all the rules in the middle of the process. And it still came out okay. Crazy process.



It had a great, dark quality. Why was it shelved for a year at Warner Bros.?

I'm not sure it tested particularly well. They added a voiceover narration and then took it off and then added it again, and then cut it. They tinkered with it.

They tinkered with it in the script phase. I believe they were sending it directly to video. It was clear that they weren't confident about the film and were insecure about how to release it. And it was entirely possible that it could have ended up as direct to video. Which is not a bad thing, but it was in danger of not getting a theatrical release.

Abel was able to get it into the Cannes Film Festival, a very prestigious festival, where it was reviewed seriously, which helped it get a theatrical release. They released it at a horrible time, and they did not support it particularly well, in terms of marketing, because I think they were still uncomfortable with it. But I'm not particularly interested in making comfortable films. You shouldn't come out of a movie like Speed and feel comfortable. There should be no point in a movie like that where you are comfortable in your chair.

Because I certainly knew where it was going by a certain point, because we've all seen movies like that before, and all that's different is the set-up and the haircuts, you sit back and it's like sitting back and letting it wash over you. It stops even being a ride. A movie should be a good ride.

You don't sit back in a rollercoaster. You hang on. And you don't have to hang on for most movies now. Even the big exciting ones that promise you they're going to be a ride.

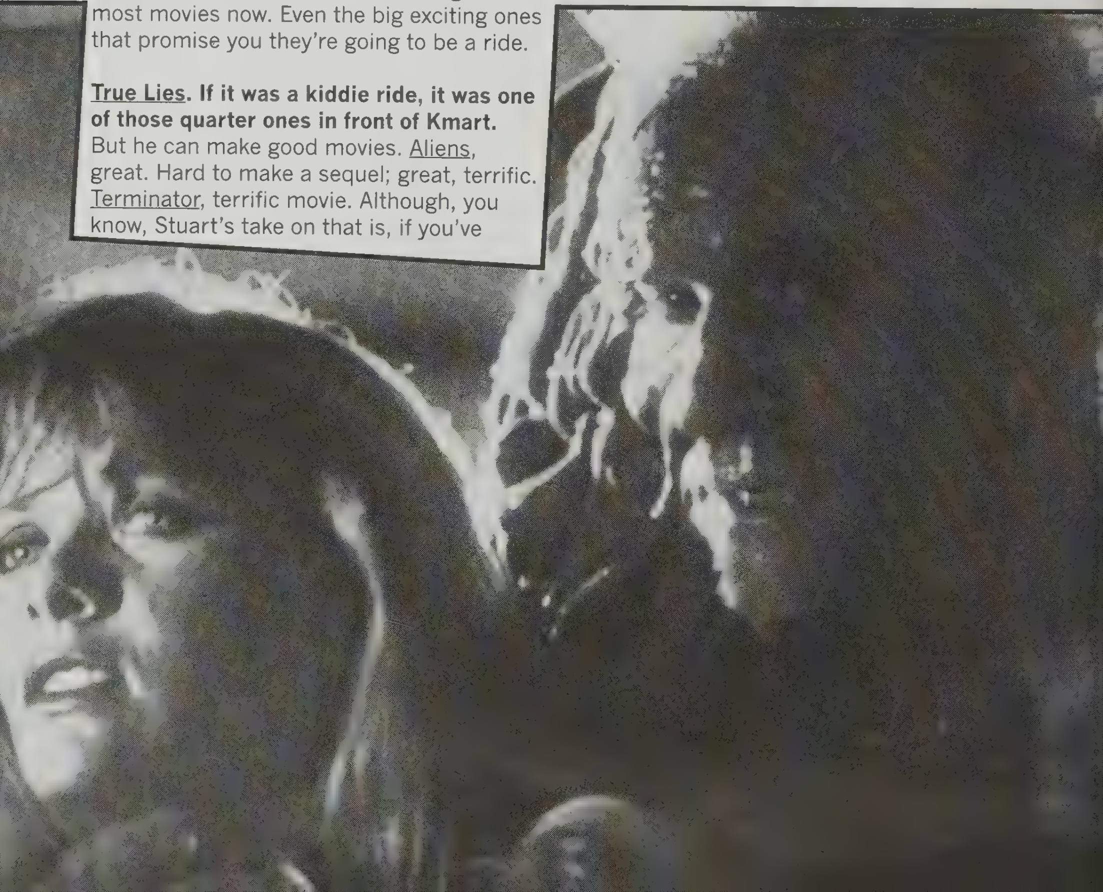
True Lies. If it was a kiddie ride, it was one of those quarter ones in front of Kmart.

But he can make good movies. Aliens, great. Hard to make a sequel; great, terrific. Terminator, terrific movie. Although, you know, Stuart's take on that is, if you've got Arnold Schwarzenegger, why is he walking through a police station shooting everybody? He's Arnold Schwarzenegger, he's a terminator; he's metal underneath. He should just be knocking them aside.

There is something in that imagination, that's in the Terminator mythology, that leans on guns. That it's a shoot-'em-up. That it's ultimately a Rambo movie. Whereas the best thing about the Terminator mythology is the science-fiction aspect of it; that it doesn't have to be a shoot-'em-up.

It's not a Rambo movie, it's a neat, well-crafted sci-fi story. There's just something about that in James Cameron's movies—he wants to be both of those things. And maybe it's that Hollywood feels more comfortable with shoot-'em-ups than they do with science-fiction.

But because there's a certain amount of Aliens that turns into a shoot-'em-up. That's



all. It's war. It's a war movie. It's where the war movie genre crosses with the science-fiction/horror movie genre. And that wasn't there in the Ridley Scott/HR Giger original.

I can't badmouth True Lies for two reasons: I haven't seen it, and an old friend from college cut it. Again, there were some really talented people I've been fortunate to go to school with. At the University of Wisconsin, Mark Goldblatt was in all the film societies, and he ended up cutting Rambo and working for Jim Cameron. And he's terrific. He is a spectacular editor.

We don't give editors enough credit for their true genius. Lee Percy on Re-Animator. Terrific guy. Ended up cutting Reversal of Fortune, where Jeremy Irons played Claus von Bulow, which is an interesting movie to cut. Because it's a spooky movie. It's got a dead person who is in a coma doing the voiceover narration. Lee is brilliant. And when you work with a good editor, you've got so much more of a chance of making a good movie. They don't get enough credit, either.

You and Stuart and Brian all were happening at this really great time.

I like to think it was a great time because we were all happening.

When Re-Animator was released, it was the last golden age of the horror film. And the last age of the horror film, really, as far as a theatrical release.

The last one we can remember before the next.

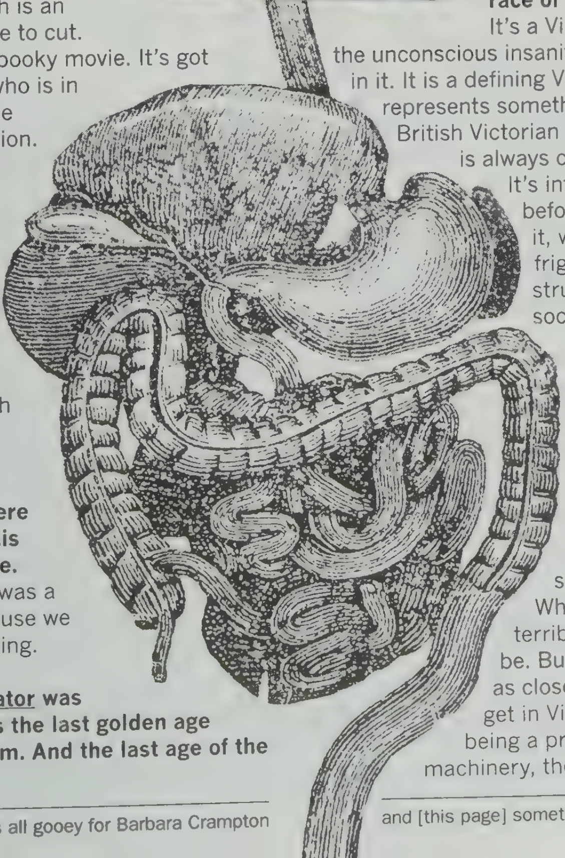
I recently saw The Conversation. You just couldn't do that film today.

Remember I was talking about foreign films? That's a foreign film. And I think what's making Coppola crazy is that he would like to make foreign films, and he knows that he can't. I was not a fan of Coppola's Dracula, because I've taught the book, and I'm a great fan of the book. It misplaced the whole idea of the book. There is no love story in the book.

He just wants to create this race of evil vampires.

It's a Victorian novel. It has the unconscious insanity of the Victorian age in it. It is a defining Victorian novel. Dracula represents something that was there in British Victorian culture. Van Helsing is always calling Dracula a baby. It's infantile sexuality, right before Freud discovered it, which was totally frightening to the very structured Victorian society.

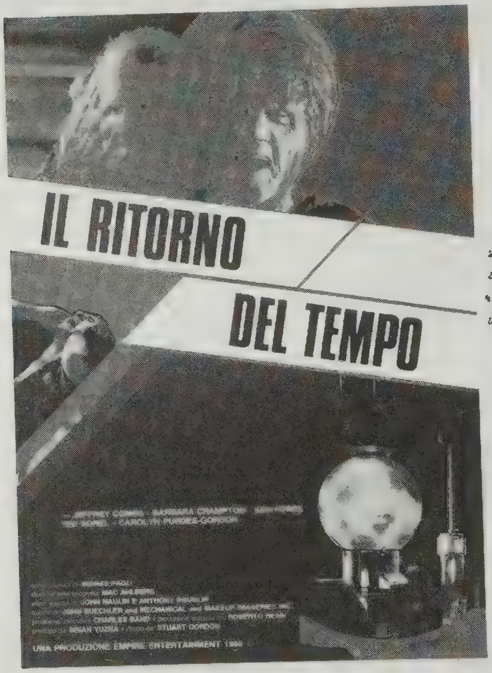
Mina is a victim because she's dangerously close to becoming a true adult. If you read the novel, she's called a 'new woman' all the time. She learns to use a typewriter, she helps her husband. Which nowadays is a terribly misogynist thing to be. But at the time, it was as close as a woman could get in Victorian society to being a professional. Using the machinery, the technology, that only



Dr. Praetorius goes all gooey for Barbara Crampton and [this page] something gooey *From Beyond*.

men were allowed to use. Actually having a useful job as opposed to being a decoration in the husband's house or a domestic slave.

Mina is a powerful figure in the book, whereas in the movie she's a romance heroine, which is not at all what she is in the novel. Lucy is the romance heroine in the novel, which is why she dies. That's why she's killed. It's a very, very interesting book. Very little of that ends up in the movie.



Italian insert for *From Beyond.*

Any plans on adapting any of the works relating to your doctorate in eighteenth-century Gothic literature?

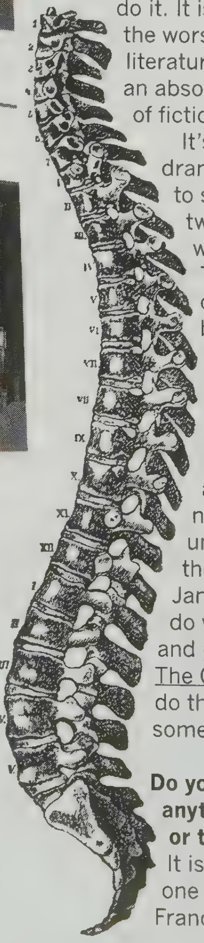
I have two relatively obscure pieces that I think would make good plays. I had thought there was almost no way to adapt this one piece, a novel called Vathek, by William Beckford.

It's not really a horror novel, although it does end up in a version of Hell. It's a bizarre Oriental novel of the late eighteenth-century. It's often published as a horror novel, as a gothic, which is pushing it. I think it would make a terrific play.

It's insane and scary and hilarious at the same time. Or it can be. And very interesting. There are things in it that are impossible to do, that need to be done onstage. At least I thought they were impossible to do until I saw The Mahabharata, by Peter Brook. He did several of them.

He found a way for his actors to do several of these things that would have to be done to make Vathek into a viable dramatic piece. He's one of the great geniuses. I discovered you have to be a great genius to figure out how to do it, and Peter Brook showed me how to do it, the there could be a possibility of actually doing it.

I think that as hoary and sort of insubstantial a piece as The Castle of Otranto is, I would love to see Masterpiece Theater do it. It is a masterpiece. It's probably the worst masterpiece in the history of literature, but it is a masterpiece. It's an absolutely crucial text in the history of fiction.



It's also a powerfully visual, dramatic five-act structure. I'd love to see Masterpiece Theater do a two-part version of that. Again, it would be crazy. But Masterpiece Theater isn't in the business of being crazy; they're in the business of making soap opera versions of great literature.

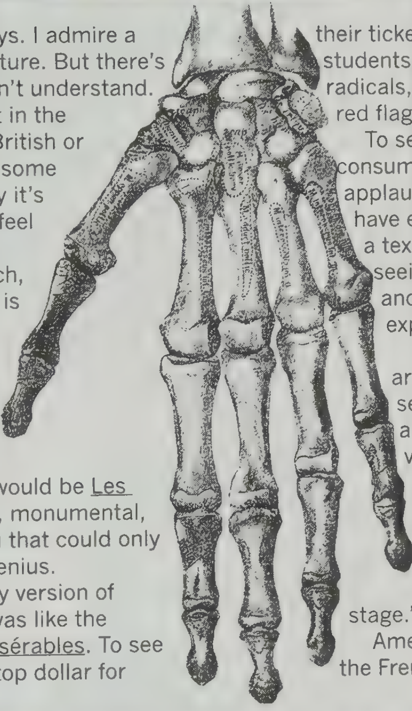
Every once in a while they come close to it. Mostly with modern pieces. They did Northanger Abbey, which is anti-Gothic. It's not a Gothic novel. They did an acceptably unacceptable job with it. So if they can do that, just because it's Jane Austen, they could certainly do what I think is a more serious and powerful piece, potentially, with The Castle of Otranto. I wouldn't do that project. That would be somebody else's job.

Do you have any interest in adapting anything by Joris-Karl Huysmans or the Marquis de Sade?

It is there to be done. I'm not the one to do it. I love Paris, I love France. I'm personally connected to the country in many ways. I admire a great deal of French culture. But there's something about it I don't understand. And I would not try. Not in the way that I understand British or American culture, even some Italian culture. Primarily it's the humor. I would not feel comfortable adapting anything that was French, although I think Balzac is a terrific genius.

Going to see Les Misérables on Broadway made me crazy. One of the truly wonderful fictional experiences of my life would be Les Misérables. A powerful, monumental, all-encompassing novel that could only be written by a great genius.

Seeing the Broadway version of it was so appalling. It was like the Greatest Hits of Les Misérables. To see an audience that paid top dollar for their tickets, stand and applaud these students marching to their death as radicals, as pre-communists, under a red flag.



To see this audience, soaked in consumer capitalism, stand and applaud this, was as alienated as I have ever seen an audience from a text, from what they were really seeing. It was so emotionally and intellectually distressing an experience.

I taught an interdisciplinary arts class, and we had gone to see it. After the class, I went and got the Classic Comics version, number nine in the series, and brought it into class. I held it up and I said, "There is more of Les Misérables in this comic book, than there was on that stage."

Americans are very ignorant of the French, more so than the French

Gabrielle Anwar splish-splashes the night away in *Body Snatchers*.

are of Americans. You just watch the Jean-Luc Godard films; he knows a lot about America. We know almost nothing about France. It might be that since I grew up in American culture, I don't feel capable of adapting something French.

Half the comedies that are made are French comedies made into very tepid and worthless Hollywood versions. And if that's the best we can do, we'd better take another look at that before we do any more. I don't want to participate. Although, Les Misérables was written by a couple of French guys. So they have no excuse.

If you were writing Re-Animator today, would you attempt to put something like the 'head' scene into the script?
Sure, if I thought of it, I'd put it in.

So you're not editing yourself for the MPAA as you're writing?
No, never. It's somebody else's job. That's why there's an MPAA. They do that job. That's why there are producers. As I said before, you come up to the line. My job is to take one step over the line. And when they have said: Oops, you can't do that, usually they laugh, they like it, and they know you can't do that.

Barbara Crampton, Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott, Stuart Gordon, and Brian Yuzna on the set of *Re-Animator.*

When I've done that, I feel I've done my job. Then I will go back and write the script they hired me to write. I am usually a hired hack. My job is to write the story that they give me. I've done very few spec scripts that you sell. That's why I'm not as rich as Shane Black.

If I am hired to write something I will do as professional a job as I possibly can. When I find out what the limits are, I will conform to those limits because the people who hired me tell me that that's as far as I can go. Fine.

That's the deal. But I am not comfortable, and I haven't done my best work, unless I've found that limit. The only way you find that limit is to step over it.

Of course I would do it, I would do anything.

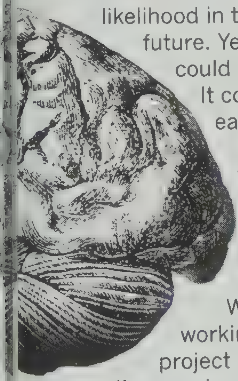
Any line-stepping with Castle Freak?
Working with Stuart is interesting, because Stuart is interested in going over the line and staying there. Stuart is more avant-garde than I am, in the sense that we walk over together, and then I'm willing to walk back. I will retreat. Stuart will dig his heels in and fight till the last man.

Stuart wants to fight, and I have gotten to the point where I depend on having that, and it's unfortunate. I should go up there and stand next to Stuart. But one of the virtues of being in New York is I don't have to be on the front line.

Stuart will fight very hard to make uncomfortable movies, to make movies that show the real consequences of violence, to make movies that walk that line of humor and horror. Stuart will go out there.

Is there any chance of you, Brian and Stuart all being involved with House of Re-Animator?

There's a chance. We all come together and blow apart on that project regularly. It's discussed, half-outlined, abandoned over and over again. Is there a chance? Sure, there's a chance. Is there a likelihood? There was more of a likelihood six months ago than there is now. But there's likely to be another window of likelihood in the near future. Yeah, that could happen. It could also easily die. We would like to make movies together again. We are all working on a project now that I'm sure is not going to be made, because it doesn't look like a Hollywood movie and it doesn't act like a Hollywood movie and it's probably not going to be a Hollywood movie. I plan on working with both of them again in the future, because it's hard to find good people to work with. It's easy to find talented people. It's hard to find good people. Talented people who share the same corner of the imagination, and these guys do, and they're also friends.



Jennifer Tilly = Not Happy in *Body Snatchers.*

One of the few real rewards of working in Hollywood on Hollywood films is that I get to work with friends. It means you can let some of those guards down. You don't have to be as ego-driven. You don't have to hide or protect yourself or make mindless stands where you should be compromising. I know how to compromise with Stuart and Brian, and I know why I do it, and they know what I won't compromise on.

It makes for a real working relationship, a real collaboration, as opposed to the enforced collaboration that all films are. That's why we can occasionally get something real on the screen.

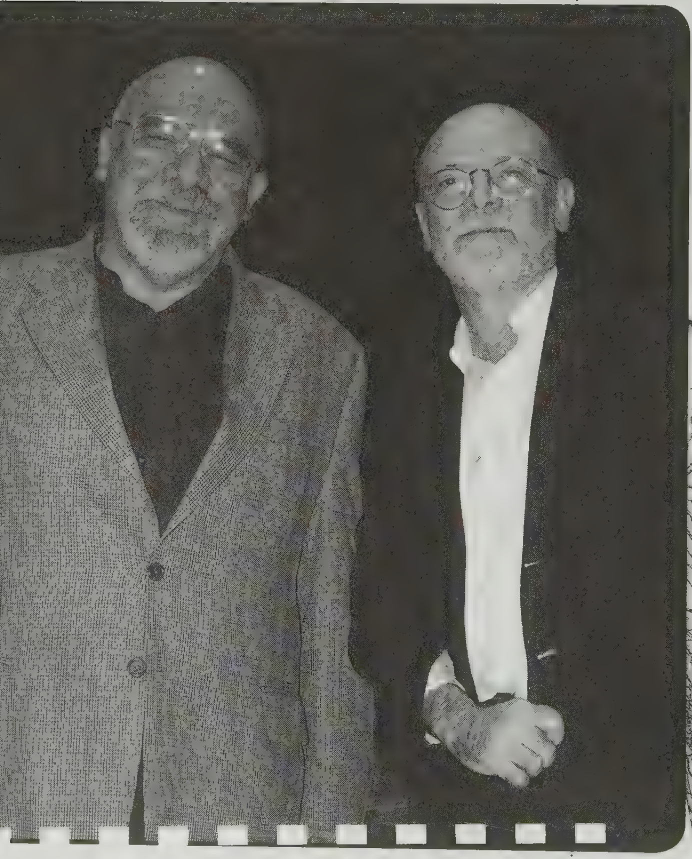
What other projects are you working on now?

Everybody has a half dozen different projects going on. I have several Lovecraft adaptations in various stages of development, all of which Stuart and a couple of other producers have. There is a possibility of working with Brian on another project, whether it's a Lovecraft project, a Re-Animator project or not. There's a possibility of another thriller project with

Greg Martinelli, who I cowrote Mortal Sins with. Another friend who's a producer just called me the other day and wanted to know if I wanted to work on a scientific thriller. What's most likely is that someone will call me up and hire me to write a project I know nothing about.

The process works in two ways. You can do something that you want to do until it gets done. I have a number of projects that, if I get ahead financially where I could afford some time to write, I would love to do. But it's much more likely that what's going to happen is the other potential, which is that people call you up and they say: We have a project. Do you want to write this?

It sounds interesting, you get to work with friends, I need the money, and I say yes. The next project we'll work on together, I don't know. I'm sure there'll be one. I don't know what it is.



Stuart Gordon and Dennis Paoli at the Chiller Theater convention in New Jersey, 2005. Photo Shade Rupe.

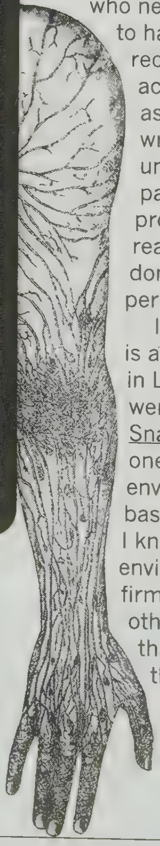
I have a couple of academic pieces I have to do right now. The first thing I have to do is finish reading Coleridge's biography.

Are you just as interested in teaching and academics as you are in screenwriting?

Yes. I don't think I could do one without the other right now. They give me perspective on each other. They inform each other. They are at least as important as each other. I run the tutorial service here, and we actually see something real happen.

Writing scripts and sending them off to Hollywood is a fantasy. Seeing an immigrant student who already has a degree in a foreign country, but who needs to learn English to have that degree recognized in America, actually make progress as an academic writer at an American university, and to participate in that process is something real. You've actually done something for a person.

I have a friend who is also a screenwriter in L.A., and when we were working on Body Snatchers, we made one of the characters an environmental scientist, based on people that I know who work for environmental consulting firms. When I told my other screenwriter friend that we were creating this character, he said, "Oh, you're so lucky you live in New York where people have real jobs."



L.A. is a one-industry town. They know about movies. Now they know something about earthquakes and crime. But mostly they write about what they've seen in the movies. Living outside of Los Angeles keeps you in touch with what is actually going on. Real jobs that real people have. Real triumphs and disasters in real people's lives. Real problems that real people face, that you don't get to see a lot in Hollywood films.

Even if you're writing in a fantasy genre, it helps to make that fantasy real. And I think it's easier living here, having a different job, being a working person. It helps me write, just as writing helps me work in academia. It helps me see. I'm working with texts in a different way, bringing them to life in a way that they don't get to come to life in academia too often.

Are you interested in directing films at all?
No, although I do have some interest in producing. It might help the script get shot closer to the way it was written. Although I try to be as loose as possible about that. A lot of other people have a lot to give to a movie besides the script, and I don't want to inhibit that. Producing also puts you closer to the money. I would like to get paid first, as opposed to last. I wouldn't be able to keep my academic job and direct. Directing is not a full-time job. Directing is an obsession.

Directing is very, very hard. So is writing, but directing is physically demanding. Directing calls for a command of a situation that I don't necessarily feel comfortable with. There's something about writing, where I get to work with friends or I get to work alone, that's more comfortable. Directing, you're directing other people.

I'm not always comfortable doing that. I can administrate. I can help put people into a position where they can do their jobs better. But to make somebody do what I want them to do, to make somebody conform to my vision, is not something I'm necessarily comfortable with. If I wanted to do that then I could write a novel and then the characters would do that.

There are a couple of projects that I have in mind that I see so clearly that I might want to direct them, just because I see them so clearly. That would be a great luxury, and maybe when I'm older and don't have to do a lot of other things going on, and can fail in some spectacular way, I will try do that. But that would be a labor of love. It's not necessarily a labor I'm interested in doing.

Who would you like to see direct one of these script ideas that you have?
That's a tough question. Because it's different than who my favorite directors are. My favorite directors are the big names: Bergman, Kurosawa, Welles. And they do exactly what they want to do. But would I want somebody like that directing one of my scripts? No way.

They have their own thing. They're so powerfully doing their own thing that they would have very little to do with mine. They would run over my work and leave it trampled. Or else open it up in such a way that it's not my work anymore.

And Abel Ferrara?
I wouldn't mind Abel Ferrara shooting anything that I did, but I know he's going to have Nick St. John working on the script after I've worked on it.

He also wrote The Addiction.
He writes almost everything, or at some point writes on almost everything.

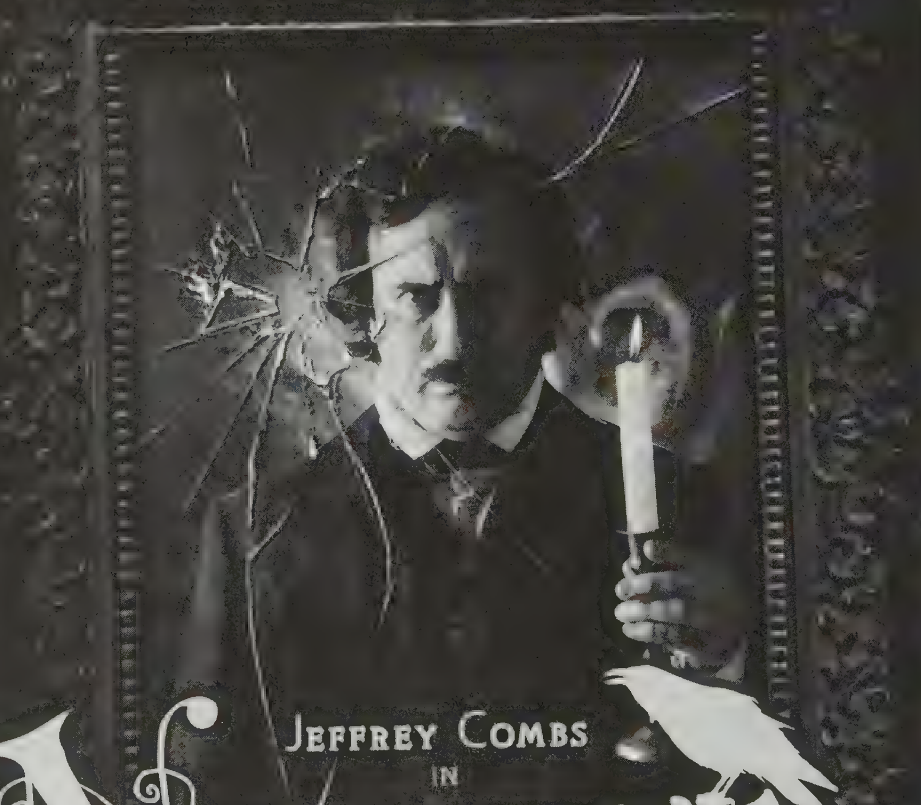
Abel told me Chris Walken signed on for it.
Great actor, Chris Walken. I can think of actors I would love to have in my movies, whom I think are spectacular, who always surprise me with their performances. And, again, they're uncomfortable people. They portray uncomfortable people. Their performances are unsettling. I like Christopher Walken. His performance in At Close Range I thought was very overwhelming. Just spectacular. His work in Batman Returns is the best work on the screen, the real part of that movie.

In King of New York he would just twitch his eye, and that just communicated so much more than him talking about his childhood and being a battered kid. Just that look.
You don't think about him thinking about what he's doing. He's just doing it. I've seen him do Tennessee Williams live on Broadway.

"MESMERIZING... IT'S AS IF POE HIMSELF HAS BEEN RE-ANIMATED FOR THIS ENTHRALLING NINETY-MINUTE DISPLAY" BEN MILES, SHOWMAG

FanTasia

PRESENTS



JEFFREY COMBS
IN

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There was a point where he was sitting high up on the back of a chair, with his ass on the back, and he fell over backwards.

You couldn't tell if that was an accident that night, or if he did that every night. Ties rose off of men's breasts, because the whole audience gasped, and the air came out of the room in the back and sucked the ties up. It was a shocking moment of theater the like of which you rarely see.

I knew somebody in the production who told me Chris did it every night. But it was a shock. That's what an actor can bring to a performance. I know writers who are very jealous of their words and their work, and you just can't have an ego on that level working in a collaborative medium like this. Because it doesn't allow other people to do their work.

That's why I wouldn't want to direct. That's why I don't think it's a good idea for playwrights to direct their own work. I think they shouldn't direct it. I think they can often direct other people's work. There are exceptions to that. Serious exceptions to that. In film, it's different. Writers often direct their own work very well in film. Woody Allen, David Mamet. I think David Mamet directs his own work on film much better than he directs his own work onstage.

I'm still trying to think of whom I would want to direct, whom I would like to work with. You know why I can't answer the question? I don't know these people personally. I have such a history of working on a personal basis with the directors that I work with, that it's hard for me to fathom working with somebody that I don't know.

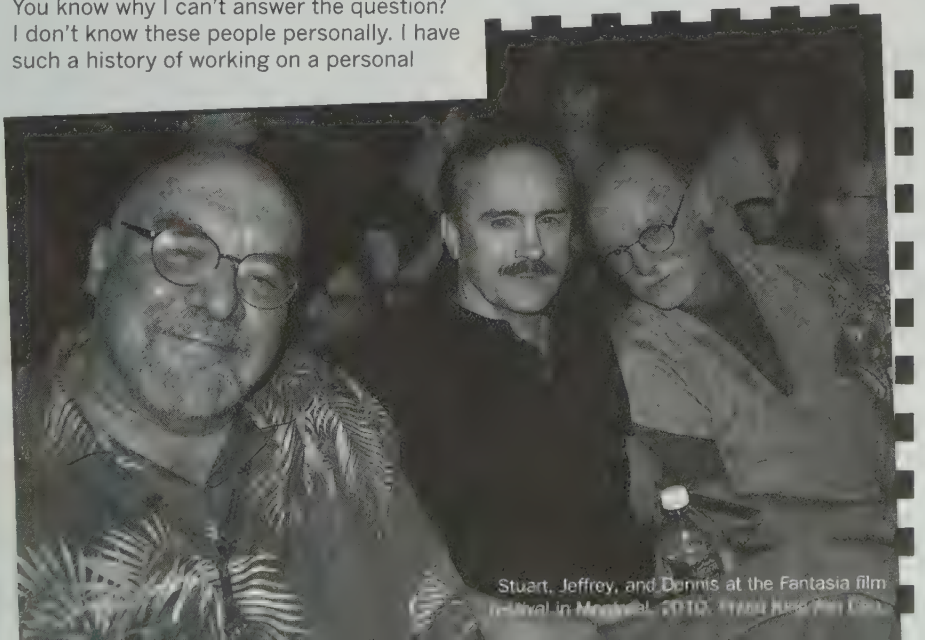
I admire a lot of people's work. The former Monty Pythons who have directed. Terry Gilliam is a super director, also with a great sense of fantasy. Brazil was a spectacular movie. And Terry Jones is also a good director. He did Erik the Viking. He's an academic, too. He wrote a whole book on a single joke from Chaucer.

I admire a lot of people, but I don't know them. I keep running up against that when trying to answer that question.

Are you ever seeing a specific actor when you're writing?

You try to do that. You see a particular person in your head. I know writers who cast in their heads so that they can see the characters better and hear them better. I've tried to do that, but the characters always slip out of the actor into some other idea of who they are.

I see the character; I don't often see actors doing them. That's why it surprises me when actors come and do things in the parts, because, Oh, I didn't see that! I didn't hear that. I didn't know that was going to happen. ◉



Stuart, Jeffrey, and Dennis at the Fantasia film festival in Montreal, 2010. [illegible]

Fighting, killing, maiming, agent orange and torture cages were the easy part!...

MICHAEL HERZ

"He wanted more justification for the murders."

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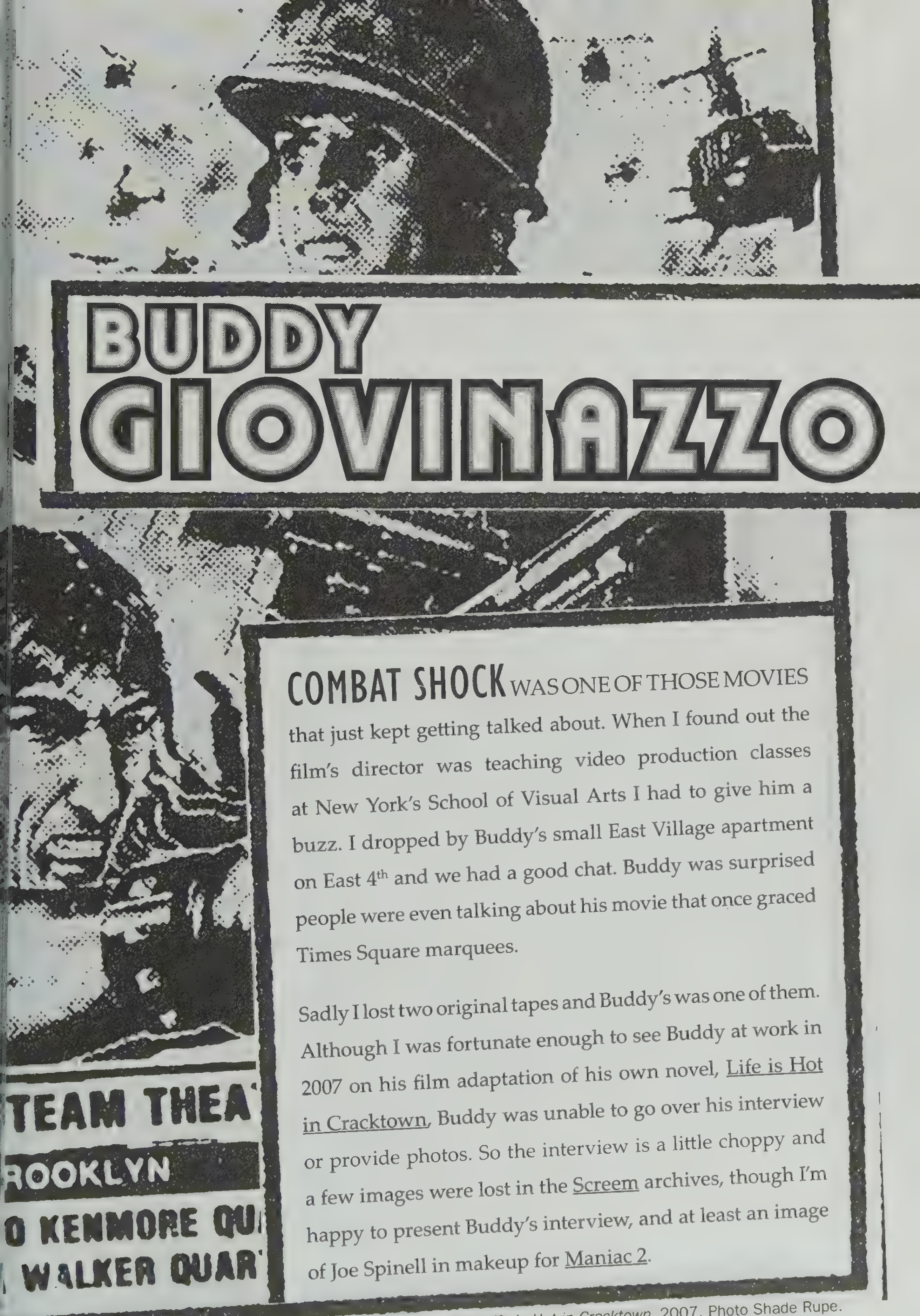
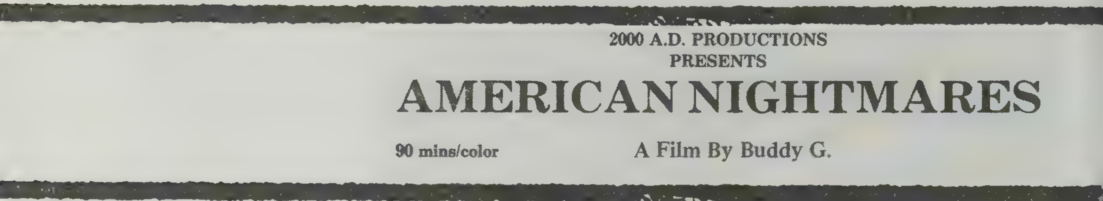
BUDDY GIOVINAZZO



COMBAT SHOCK WAS ONE OF THOSE MOVIES that just kept getting talked about. When I found out the film's director was teaching video production classes at New York's School of Visual Arts I had to give him a buzz. I dropped by Buddy's small East Village apartment on East 4th and we had a good chat. Buddy was surprised people were even talking about his movie that once graced Times Square marquees.

Sadly I lost two original tapes and Buddy's was one of them. Although I was fortunate enough to see Buddy at work in 2007 on his film adaptation of his own novel, Life is Hot in Cracktown, Buddy was unable to go over his interview or provide photos. So the interview is a little choppy and a few images were lost in the Screem archives, though I'm happy to present Buddy's interview, and at least an image of Joe Spinell in makeup for Maniac 2.

ious page: Buddy and his wife Gesine on the final night of shooting *Life is Hot in Cracktown*, 2007. Photo Shade Rupe.



2000 A.D. PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS
AMERICAN NIGHTMARES
90 mins/color
A Film By Buddy G.

SHADE RUPE: Where is Ricky Giovinazzo now?

BUDDY GIOVINAZZO: He's doing the music for Life Sentences. He's been composing. He hasn't been doing any acting. He doesn't consider himself an actor.

Is there enough material from the Combat Shock tapes to release a soundtrack?

I don't think we own the rights, I think Troma has them. It wasn't anything we ever pursued.

Were you able to use any other members of the Combat Shock crew for this film?

No, they're all doing other stuff now.

Who are Rose, Jerry and Bobby Giovinazzo?

Rose is my mother, Jerry is my father and Bobby is my brother.

Were Kaufman and Herz involved in the production of Combat Shock?

No, they became executive producers when they distributed the film.

What are the differences between the Troma cut, Combat Shock, and your cut, American Nightmares?

They had to cut out some of the violence. There was only a minute of footage cut out. They cut out some stuff when the wife dies, and the foetus on the end of the coat hanger.

Are there any plans on releasing your cut as American Nightmares?

Top: Headline for invite for the premiere of *Combat Shock* under its original title, *American Nightmares*.
Above: Ricky Giovi

Not right now. We'll see what happens with Life Sentences and if there is enough interest we may do that.

Does Troma own Combat Shock?
Yes.

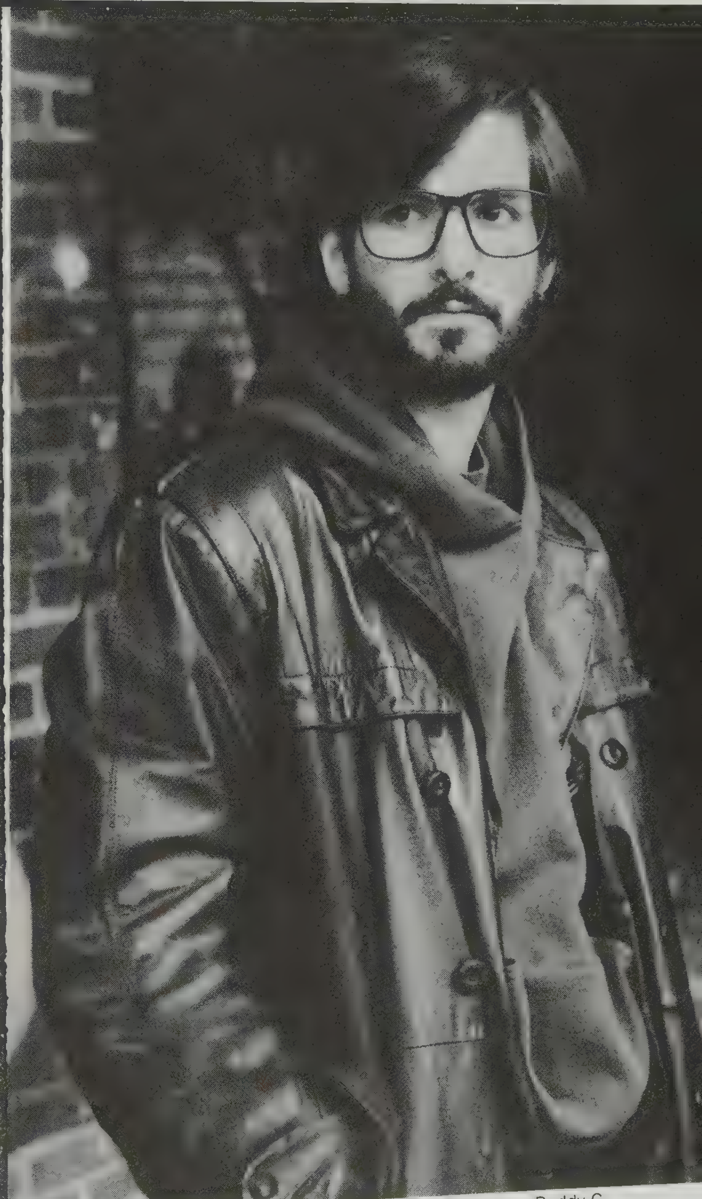
Did you receive any money from the deal with Troma?
Some, but definitely not enough to pay off the picture.

How was your experience with Troma?
Generally, it was good. I like Lloyd Kaufman a lot as a person. Lloyd actually really liked the film. He wouldn't have cut it at all if he didn't have to.

How long did it take once the film was finished and edited before Troma picked it up?
It took about a year. I took it around for a year to festivals before Troma picked it up.

What were your next projects after Combat Shock was released?
After Troma picked up Combat Shock, I started the Maniac 2 trailer and directed a music video for a group called Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost, and two more for a band called Circus 2000 A.D.

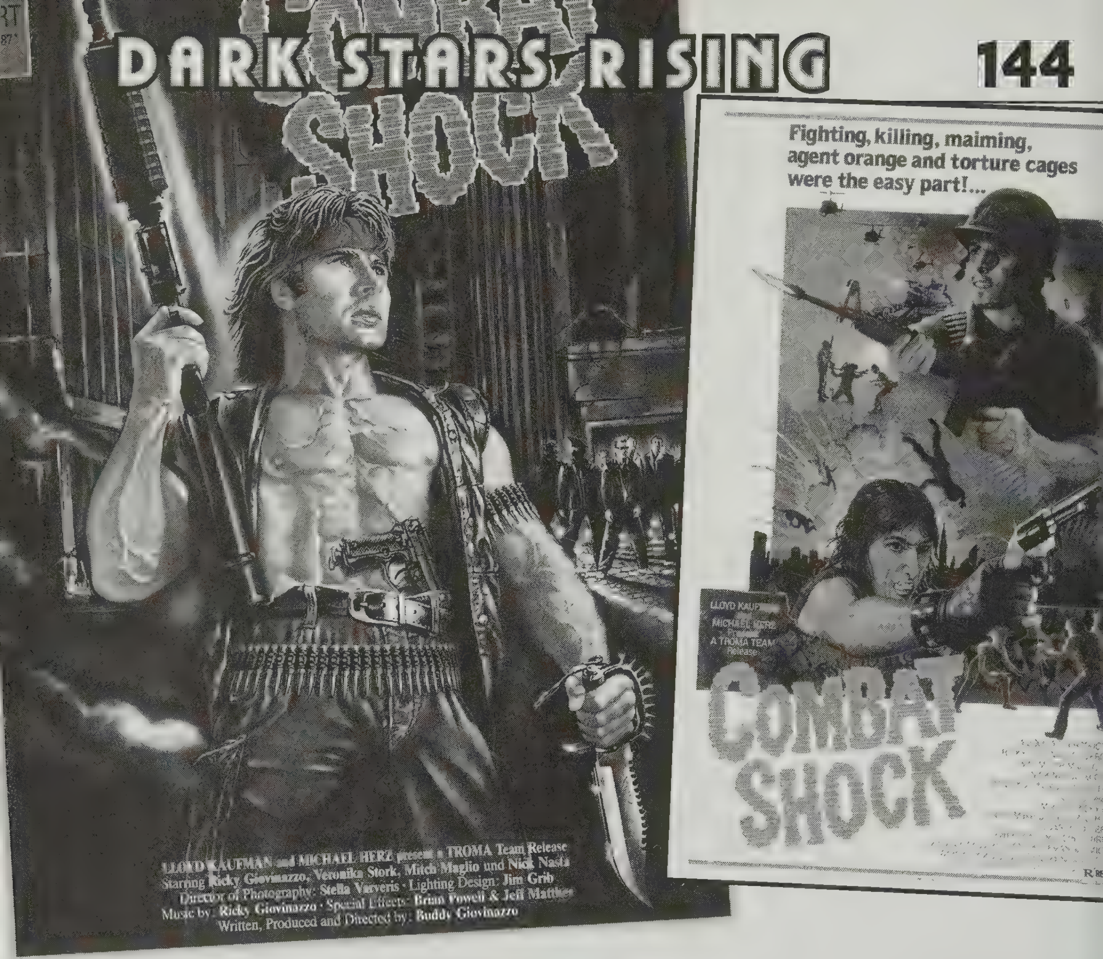
How did you get the Maniac 2 gig?
I heard from my gaffer that Joe Spinell was looking for a director for Maniac 2 and that he worked in this bar so I gave him a call and he said come on in. It was a bar uptown on 82nd Street and we hung out and we really liked each other and got along really well.



Buddy G.

So Joe Spinell was the producer?
Oh definitely, that was his goal.

Is it supposed to be the same character as the one in Maniac?
No, it's supposed to be like a twin brother. He didn't want it to be the same character


COMBAT SHOCK
LLOYD KAUFMAN and MICHAEL HERZ present a TROMA Team Release
Starring Ricky Giovinazzo, Veronika Stork, Mitch Maglio und Nick Nasta
Director of Photography: Stella Varveris · Lighting Design: Jim Grib
Music by: Ricky Giovinazzo · Special Effects: Brian Powell & Jeff Matthes
Written, Produced and Directed by: Buddy Giovinazzo
Fighting, killing, maiming, agent orange and torture cages were the easy part!...
LLOYD KAUF
MICHAEL HERZ
A TROMA TEAM Release
COMBAT SHOCK

because he took a lot of shit for that character. Women's groups were picketing Maniac and he just didn't need it. He wanted more justification for the murders. He didn't want a guy who was just going to kill women for no reason.

Was there any sort of basis on John Gacy for this character?
Not while we were making it. It was really Joe's character. I wrote the script after meeting Joe. He told me what the character and story was and he had the basic scenario. I put it into script form and wrote the dialog.

So there is a full script for the film?
There was. This was before I had a computer. I wrote the screenplay and Joe said he had to have it one day to give to somebody and I never saw the script again. I never had a copy.

How far into making the film were you when he passed away?
It was hard to tell. We were probably three months away from having something. I don't know where the money was coming from, that was all Joe's business.

Does he play the clown character on the TV show or is he thinking he's the character?
No, he really plays the kiddie show host, Mr. Robbie. He would put his makeup on at home and they would come pick him up for the show. I heard there's a film out there called Mr. Rabbie about a kiddie-show-host killer and I think Joe might have gotten the idea from that.

Did he raise the budget for the trailer?
Yeah, but I wound up paying $400 which he still owes me.

When did you shoot the trailer?

Next page: *Combat Shock* on the Deuce—at the Liberty and [inset] the Times Square theaters. Both theaters still exist but are unused as theaters today.

Around 85 or 86.

How much more footage is there beyond the three minutes on the laserdisc?
We did about an eight-minute film. When he's putting the makeup on at home, he then goes to do the show. We pick him up after the show with his makeup off, hanging out with one of his best friends at a bar. They're talking about the show and he's drunk and that's when the cook comes out and invites him into the kitchen for some blow.

Was Bill Lustig involved with the film at all?
No, Bill didn't want to do it and that's how I got involved. Joe wanted to work with Bill again but he was doing other things. The guy that hooked me up with Joe didn't even know him. He just knew he was looking for a director.

Where is 123 Depravity Street?
That's only a script. Roy Frumkes was going to produce it. We never shot anything. I don't know if we'll ever make it. After doing Life Sentences, it just seems so dark to me. I don't know if I want to make it, actually. After working with someone like Tim Roth... I just couldn't get anyone of that caliber to be in 123 Depravity Street. I could almost see doing it as a half-million-dollar feature, but that's it.

What's the basic storyline?
This kid gets out of a drug rehab and goes back home and there's this married couple that moved onto the block where he lives and he's really attracted to the woman who's a nurse and he watches her from down the block. He crashes a party they have one night and there's all this weird sexual stuff going on. The woman takes him upstairs and while they're fucking he notices the husband watching them and jerking off. He nods out on the bed and when he wakes up there's a dead girl from the party lying next to him.

The couple convince him that he must've killed her and say that if he tells the cops they'll all get in trouble. He can't deal with it and he gets the cops but when they get to the house there's no trace of the body. The couple tell the cops that the kid's been in

EXCLUSIVE NY SHOWING
FIGHTING KILLING WERE EAST PART
COMBAT SHOCK
MISSING IN ACTION
POW THE ESCAPE
PRIVATE BOOTHS
49
Empire

Special effects tests for *Combat Shock*.
Photos Edmund Varuolo

rehab for six months. And it becomes a cat and mouse game between the kid and the couple. It's a very bizarre, sexual script that I would have to have final cut over.

Does your next script Jonathan of the Night have any relation to the Hans Geisendorffer film?
No. We only shot about twelve minutes of it. Roy Frumkes was going to produce that also at one time. It's about this modern-day vampire who is searching for his sister in New York City. Every time he murders somebody and drinks their blood it acts as a hallucinogenic drug that triggers recollections of his past and it's the only way we find out about him.

How did the short video film Slice of Life come about?
We shot that in 1990. That was Steven Oddo's idea. Steve and I wanted to do something together for a long time. I met him through Roy Frumkes while we were putting 123 Depravity Street together. Steve and his girlfriend wanted to play the husband and wife.

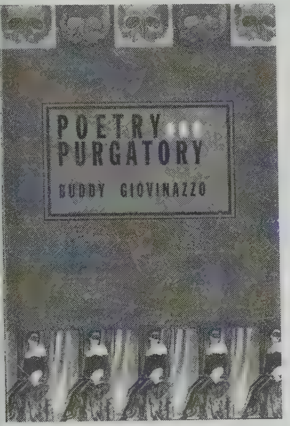
Steve really doesn't like Slice of Life at this point. He's different now. He's kind of got his shit together. He's got very mixed feelings about the film. He was into a whole different scene at that time.

Was it pre-written or understood what was going to happen?
No. He had no idea that was going to happen. He was going to have a friend come up on the rooftop and he was going to perform some homosexual acts and then cut himself. I go over with the camera and he's there with Nancy, his girlfriend, and he says that his friend chickened out. So I said let's do something. So we all went up on the roof and he and Nancy started playing around and I just started filming.

Will the film ever be released?
No. Steve doesn't really like that it's out there. That's why I didn't put any titles on it. When I sent it out Steve really didn't mind. Our agreement was that we each own it: Steve, Nancy and myself. Rick Sullivan had been selling it through his Gore Gazette, unbeknownst to me. Rick gave me a check for $95 and I split it with Steve and Nancy and that's when he told me he didn't want it out there.

What came next?
I've written three books, Life is Hot in Cracktown is the third one. I wrote that in 1989. I submitted it to several publishers and they really liked it but said they couldn't publish it and they sent me to Thunder's Mouth Press and said they would really like it. I didn't have an agent. It took a year to write and two years to sell. They had a print run of 6,000 copies.

When did you decide to turn it into a screenplay?



LIFE IS HOT IN CRACKTOWN
BUDDY GIOVINAZZO

About two or three years ago. I really liked the characters and thought it would be a really cool film.

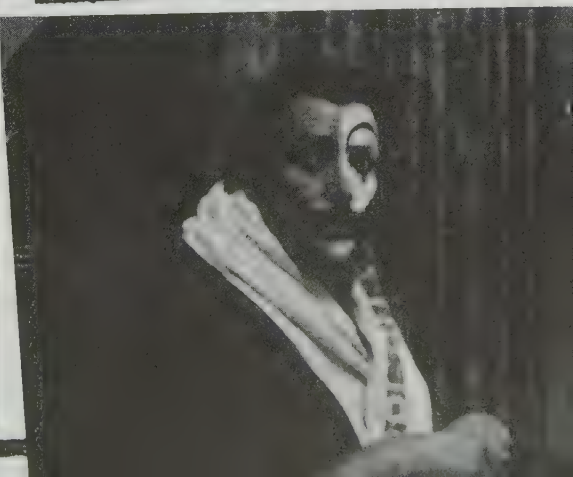
It's great how you took all these separate stories and worked them all together into a screenplay, though it's too bad that the great language of the book can't be translated to film. Why did you decide that Manny's story would be the central element of the film?
I thought that a mainstream audience could relate better to Manny. I couldn't rely on an audience to relate to any of the other characters. The idea of Manny trying to live the American dream amidst all this casual violence and twelve-year-old kids getting rich peddling drugs, while he's got a kid at home that he can't feed 'cause he's doing the right thing, is a good base to work out all the other character's stories.

Are you still planning on making it into a feature?
I don't know. After Life Sentences I had some second thoughts about it, because I would need final cut. I'm having a hard time with the violence in Life Sentences as it is. Cracktown can't be done soft. The book wasn't soft, it just can't be done that way.

Do you have final cut over Life Sentences?
No, that's up to the financier. It was his money.

When did you write Gasoline Alley? (Original title for Life Sentences.)
I wrote it about five years ago. I was going to do it for $40,000 like Combat Shock. We had Ralph Macchio and Richard Greco attached at one point. Then my friend Peter Green got attached as the character of the older brother and he gave it to his agent who loved the script and he gave it to Tim Roth. They called and said we had until August to raise the money and we could use Tim's name to do it. My producers went to the Cannes Film Festival and came back with $2 million. I flew out to L.A. to meet with Tim to see if we got along and we did.

How did you find your producers?



Right: Joe Spinell on the set of *Maniac 2.* Photo courtesy Buddy Giovinazzo.

I met them through a casting agent, a real good friend of mine, Marcia Shulman. I optioned the script to another company and they hired Marcia. That didn't pan out but I wanted to stay with Marcia and have her produce it. She was too busy so she gave it to two producers that she knew, Bob Dickson and Lisa Bruce, and they had had the script for over three years. Once Tim said he would be involved the money came very quickly.

Did you make any script changes before shooting?
I did some major polishing, especially on the dialog. Peter left the film and when he left we got James Russo at the last minute and James is ten years older and the dialog that I had written for a thirty-two-year-old didn't play for a forty-two-year-old. So I had to rework all of James' dialog and he worked on it with me.

Buddy on the set of *No Way Home*.

Did you always know you would direct the film?
Yeah, this script was never for sale. I didn't want Tim at first. I had cast a friend of mine to play Joey who was going to bring in some private money. We were going to do it for $400,000. So when Tim's agent called me I told her it was already cast—which now that I think about it I realize what an asshole I must've seemed.

When my friend's money fell through, that's when I said I have to be out of my fucking mind and called back and said, "Of course we want Tim!" We had so many names involved in this script including James LeGros. The other actors all wanted money before they'd even let us use their names. Tim said, "Tell 'em you got me," without wanting any money up front. He's really a man of his word.

Has Tim seen any of your other scripts?
He has Cracktown right now. He hasn't seen anything else. He hadn't seen Combat Shock either, when he agreed to the project.

So Joey is played by Tim Roth and Tommy is played by James Russo. Who plays Lorrain?
Lorrain is played by Deborah Unger who was just in David Cronenberg's Crash. She was also in Whispers in the Dark and Highlander III and she's got a film coming out with Michael Rooker called Keys to Tulsa.

There are some very violent and intense scenes in the script for Life Sentences. How many of these are in the film?
They've all made it as of right now. Right now it's still very bloody. It has to generate a bigger audience to make its money back after all the editing and advertising and it's not necessarily my Combat Shock audience. It has the potential to be accepted by more people than that.

I didn't shoot any footage for an R-rating or for TV. I did it on purpose so they couldn't cut it. They're trying to trim out some of the blood stuff but there's no way around it. It's pretty powerful. One guy gets shot in the face and slides down in a pool of blood and Tim and this big guy have a massive fist fight in this pool of blood in the kitchen. It's pretty gruesome.

Why has the title changed from Gasoline Alley to Life Sentences?
Gasoline Alley is owned by the Tribune Corporation, who owns the comic strip. They're claiming that Gasoline Alley is a product and that they own the product and that we would hurt their chances of turning

tim roth
james russo
Hän vietti
kuusi
vuotta
vankilassa
pitkä tie
kotiin

Tim Roth fights in a scene from *No Way Home* and [inset] Finnish video box for the film.

the comic strip into a film. You can't legally own a title and they wouldn't win in court but to fight them in court it would cost a lot of money and time and we couldn't afford to do that. We still may change the title again. Let me know if you think of anything.

When do you expect it to be released?
It should be released fall of 96.

Didn't you write a film that Carrie Fisher was in?
That was produced in 1988 and released in 1989. It was made for Vestron. It was a black comedy and they didn't like the dark tone so they had the director cut out all the black humor and jokes and it was so watered down at the end that it just didn't work. It was all studio intervention. It really didn't work out at all.

Tim Kincaid directed and his wife Cindy produced it. When I wrote it, it was called Dead and Married, which was a perfect title and it was released as She's Back, which is a stupid title.

How did you get published in that French fiction anthology?
I had a French publisher contact me and he sold Cracktown in Germany and a few other places. That story is a chapter from Cracktown.

Where is your script Dirty Money at right now?
Dirty Money was optioned by Bill Lustig. Bill was one of the first directors who didn't try to get a free option from me. He wrote me a check and he tried to attract a cast and by the time the option lapsed the film came back to me.

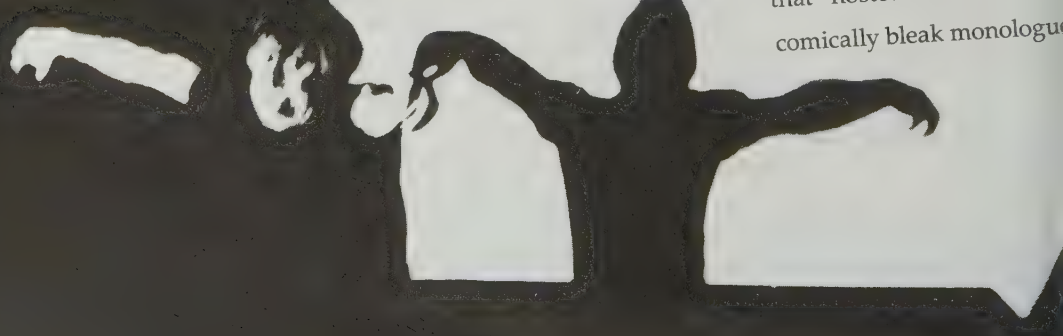
What other projects do you have in the works?
I've got another book coming out, Poetry and Purgatory, that may be coming out from Thunder's Mouth. They really like it so far and I'd really like to get that published. Right now I'm hoping to get Life Sentences out the way I want.

The degrading after-effects of living (A black mass for all colors)

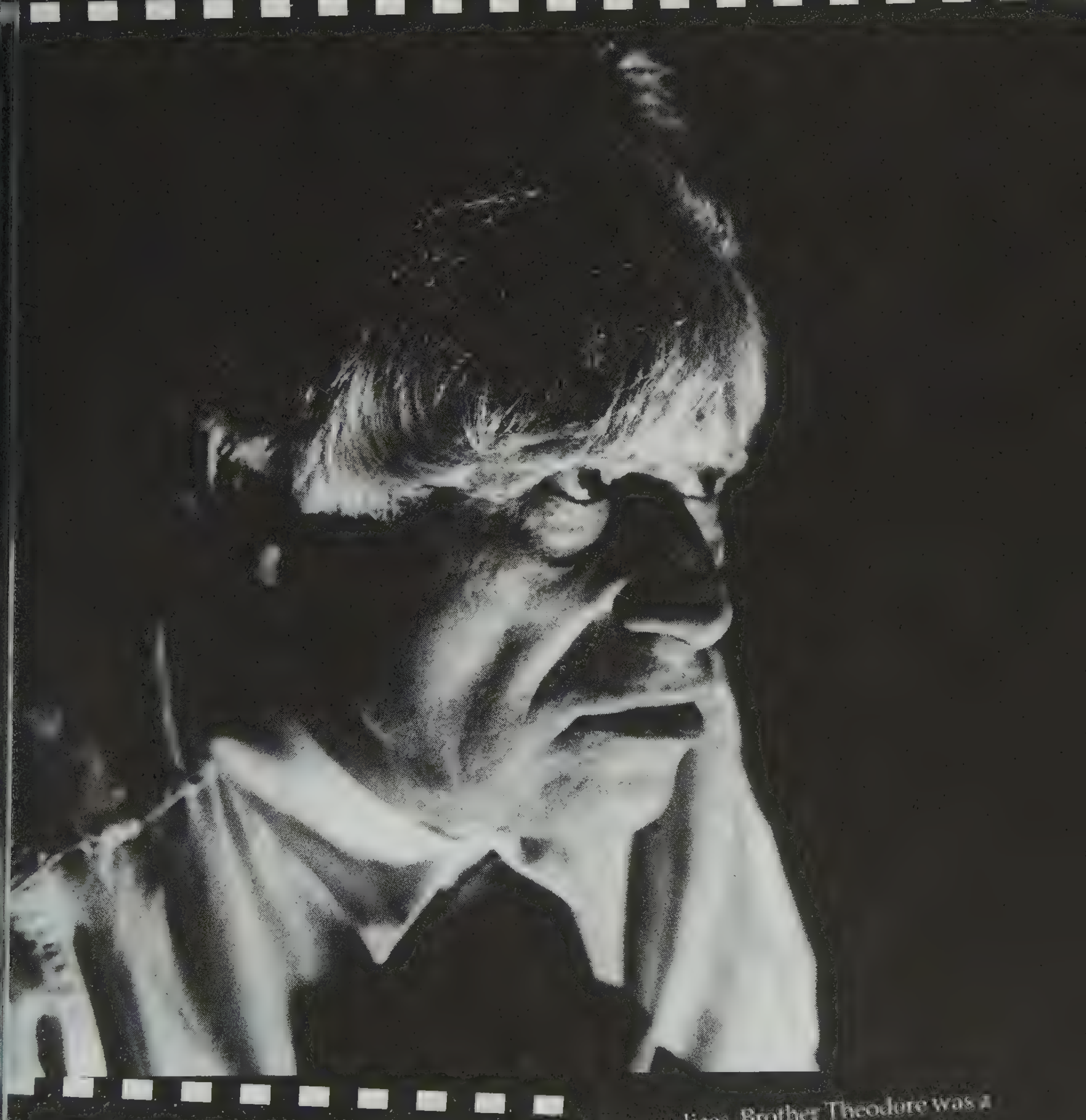
BROTHER THEODORE

Philosopher, metaphysician, and podiatrist

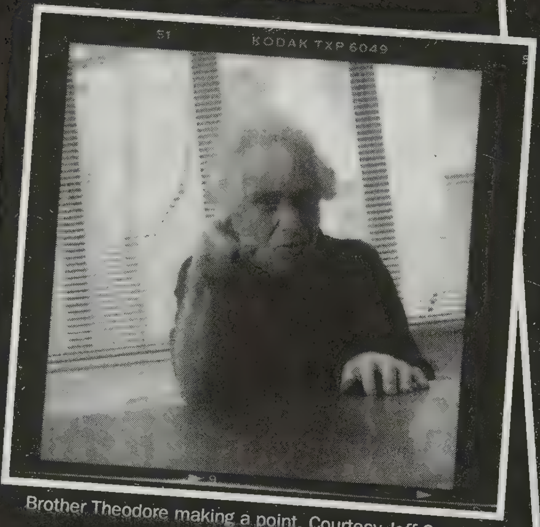
IT'S WONDERFUL to meet incredible people at any age, though meeting Brother Theodore in his nineties was an intriguing time to converse with this grand count of the New York performing scene. Having played Carnegie Hall, David Letterman, and dined wit
Orson Welles, Theodore carried a lot of history onto his black stag
reserved every Friday and Saturday night at the 13th Street Theatr
Manhattan's West Village. He performed his show there as long he c
until he suffered a fall and succumbed to pneumonia. We shared a
phone conversations and this live one in the comfy lobby of the th
that hosted Theodore's
comically bleak monologu



"We weren't unionized at that point."



A remarkable man with a heavy roster of fans and accomplices, Brother Theodore was a unique gentleman with a tragic history and a force-created future. Theodore was afraid I was going to write a book so our interview wasn't too long, though every word here is a complete nugget of fun. Brother Theodore LIVES!

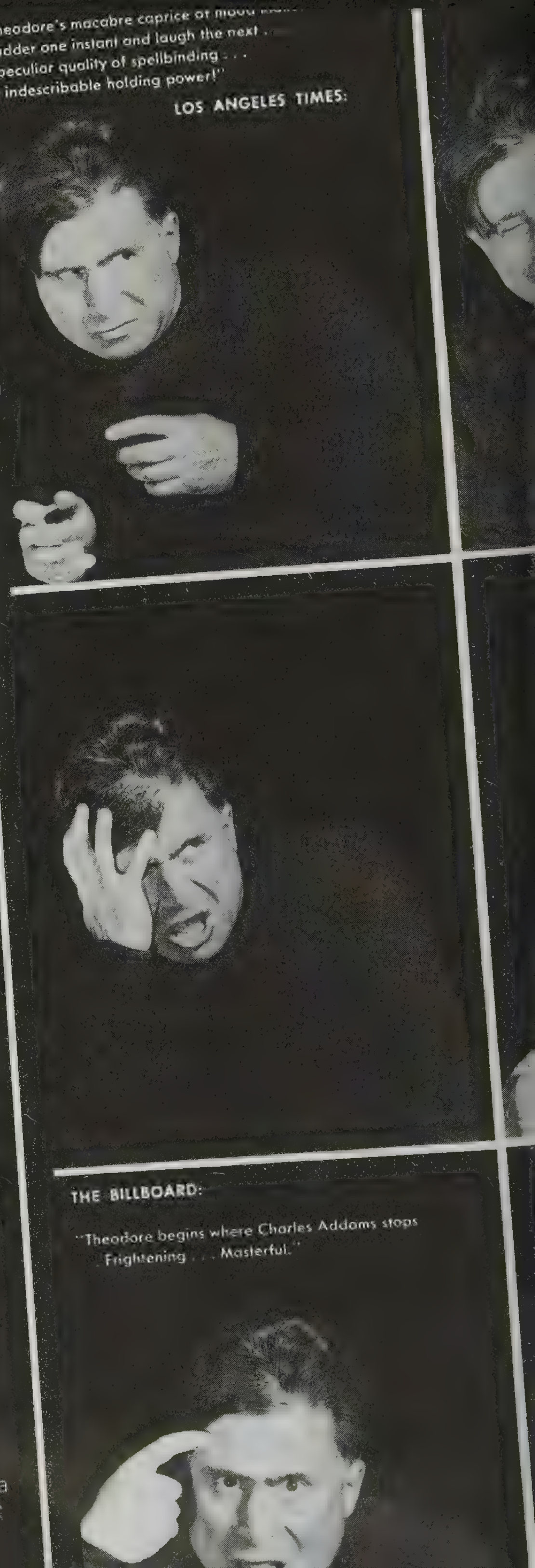


Brother Theodore making a point. Courtesy Jeff Sumerel.

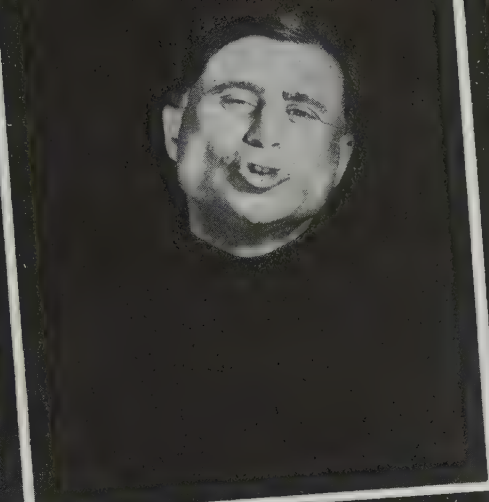
SHADE RUPE: I have a list of your appearances I know about here.
BROTHER THEODORE: I was also on the show of another famous TV comedian, whose name I have forgotten right now, who smoked a big cigar. He was run down by a car, dead: thirty-five years old. He died a year after I was on the show.

I was at the Town Hall six times, with a 110% sold-out audience. They even had people sitting on the stage, forty people on either side of me.

How much success have you had with your lectures?
The only time I ever made really good money was a part in The 'Burbs. They treated me as if I was the star of the show, which I, of course, wasn't. I was more of a glorified extra. One that cost them $200,000. I spent two months in a beautiful hotel room. I had a chauffeur-driven limousine twenty-four hours a day even when I wasn't being filmed. The best


"Theodore's macabre caprice of mood
shudder one instant and laugh the next . . .
A peculiar quality of spellbinding . . .
an indescribable holding power!"
LOS ANGELES TIMES:

THE BILLBOARD:
"Theodore begins where Charles Addams stops . . .
Frightening . . . Masterful."



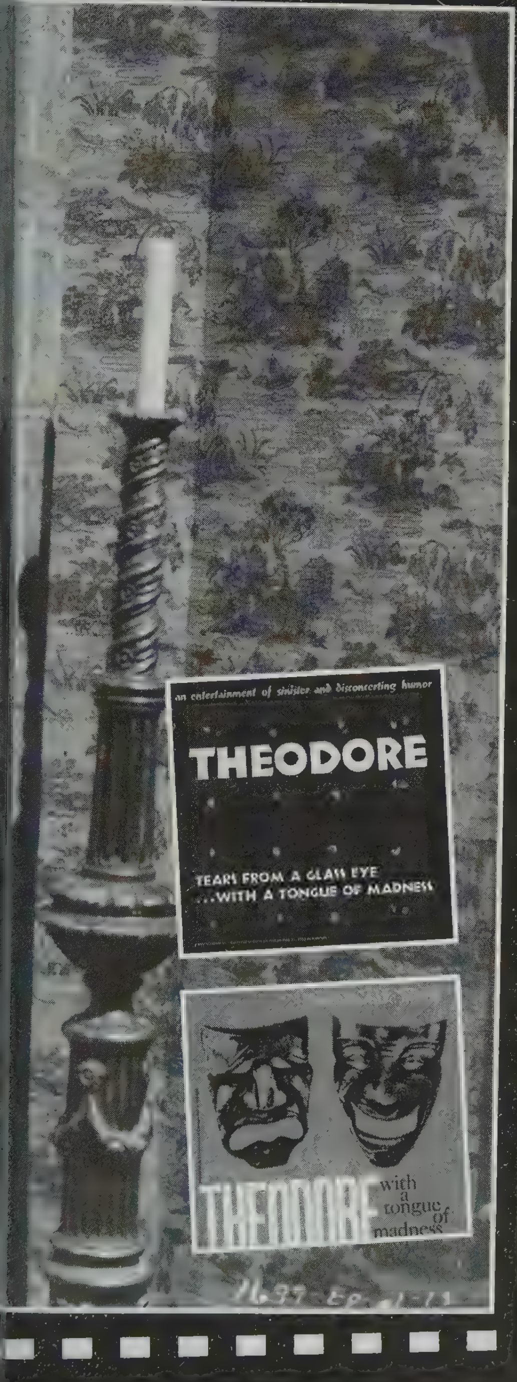
DAILY NEWS, LOS ANGELES:

"Boris Karloff, Salvadore Dali and Nijinski appear simultaneously in the person of a man named Theodore. His program — fabulous . . . fantastic . . . fascinating — is a composite of horror and surrealism. Held his audience spellbound."

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER:

"A new experience . . . Theatre fare for epicurean appetites!"

Main image and next page: Brother Theodore as Hitomu in the 1947 serial *The Black Widow.*


an entertainment of sinister and disconcerting humor
THEODORE
TEARS FROM A GLASS EYE
...WITH A TONGUE OF MADNESS
THEODORE with a tongue of madness

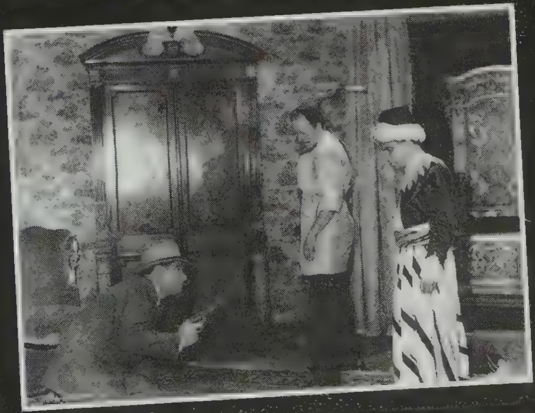
parts I was in were cut out but it was not my film, it was Tom Hanks' film.

Although most of my best scenes were cut out of the film, I must say that Joe Dante was the nicest director that anybody could have.

What were your first experiences in America after the war?
I was at Stanford University as a janitor when I came from Europe, without a penny in my pocket. I cleaned the toilets and lived in a seven-foot-square room and I had to take showers with fifty other janitors. We weren't unionized at that point.

I didn't get a penny from my stepfather's side or from my mother's side. I was simply told that they were broke. There was nothing left.

Were you creating Brother Theodore while you were a janitor?
I did not create it consciously. I asked myself what I was going to do after the war. And don't ask me about the concentration camps. I've had my ears talked off about that.



My wife was a welder in the shipyard and I was a burner in the same shipyard in San Francisco. We had worked there three-and-a-half years and had saved $6,000. They laid everyone off after the war. I didn't want to go back to Stanford and be a janitor again.

I said, What can I do in America? In Europe I was a playboy! I played chess and had beautiful women and read good books, but was morbidly interested in the macabre. I had no idea I would become an actor.

156

Brother Theodore

50
THEATRE
13th ST.

13th Street Theatre

50 West 13th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011

(Between 5th and 6th Avenues, one block east of the 7th Avenue IRT 14th Street subway.)

All tickets $12.50

Saturdays at

My parents would've thrown me out of the house.

I started performing in San Francisco. I'd never had an acting lesson in my life. My wife and I had the $6,000 we had saved and I started looking for a theater.

To make a long story short, the owners of the theater we found said okay and that I would have to pay the rent six weeks in advance. I asked for another exit from the theater so I wouldn't have to confront the audience and they said they only had one but they would protect me from unwanted advances. It ended up that my wife was the only audience. We lost the $6,000 we had saved over three-and-a-half years in six weeks and my acting career was over.

In the six weeks eleven people came to my show, and believe it or not, we had two fabulous reviews in the papers, San Francisco Chronicle, and the Examiner, a very conservative paper. Based on these reviews my wife and I borrowed some money from a very nice old lady who was charmed by my wife and particularly by me and we went to Hollywood.

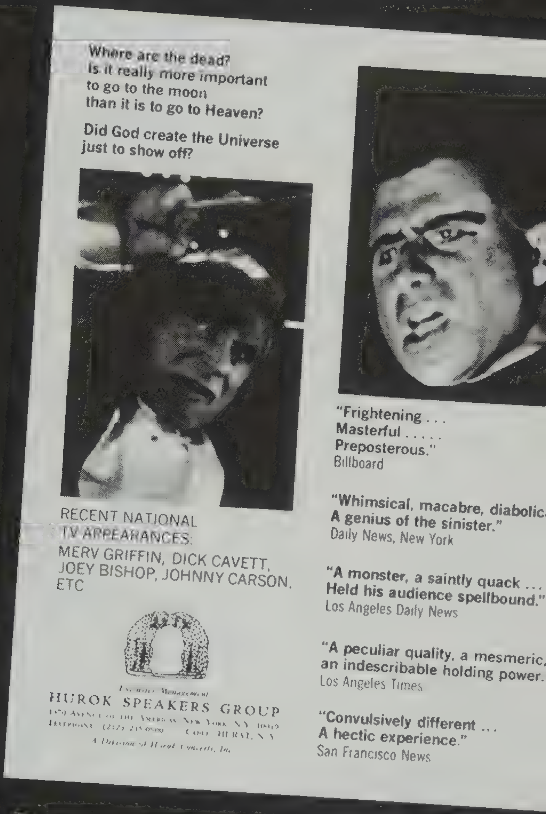
Through a miracle I cannot explain, the miracle of a total naive beginner who doesn't know anything at all about show business, nothing, nothing, nothing, within twenty-four hours I met Orson Welles and he became enormously interested in me and I have to stop here because I would have to tell so much it would be six books. I wouldn't do that.

I would love to hear about you and Orson Welles. Would you mind telling that story?
He liked me enormously, because I was never a threat to him. Because I was a beginner and a nobody and helpless. He thought I was witty and intelligent and my wife was inordinately gorgeous which probably helped also.

I married her when she was fifteen. In Vienna. Fifteen!

That's young.
Yes! [chuckles]

Once on David Letterman and you were talking about your twelve-year-old girlfriend. I remember you talking about



Where are the dead?
Is it really more important
to go to the moon
than it is to go to Heaven?

Did God create the Universe
just to show off?

RECENT NATIONAL
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HUROK SPEAKERS GROUP

"Frightening . . .
Masterful . . . . .
Preposterous."
Billboard

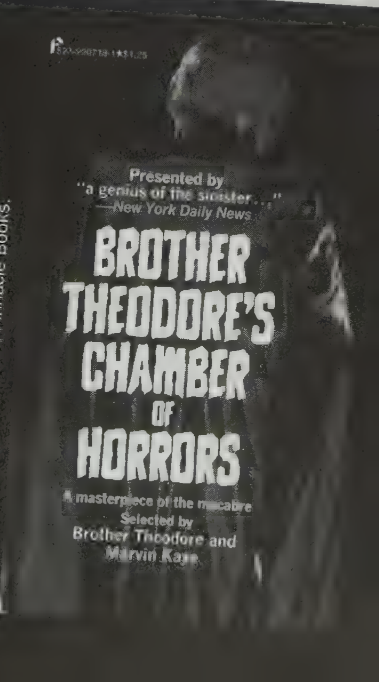
"Whimsical, macabre, diabolic
A genius of the sinister."
Daily News, New York

"A monster, a saintly quack . . .
Held his audience spellbound."
Los Angeles Daily News

"A peculiar quality, a mesmeric,
an indescribable holding power.
Los Angeles Times

"Convulsively different . . .
A hectic experience."
San Francisco News

Previous page, inset: Brother Theodore's final stage—Edith O'Hara's 13th Street Theatre. Photo Shade Rupe. This page: At his Bela Lugosi best on the cover of *Brother Theodore's Chamber of Horrors*, Pinnacle Books.


Presented by
"a genius of the sinister..."
—New York Daily News
BROTHER THEODORE'S CHAMBER OF HORRORS
A masterpiece of the macabre
Selected by
Brother Theodore and
Marvin Kaye

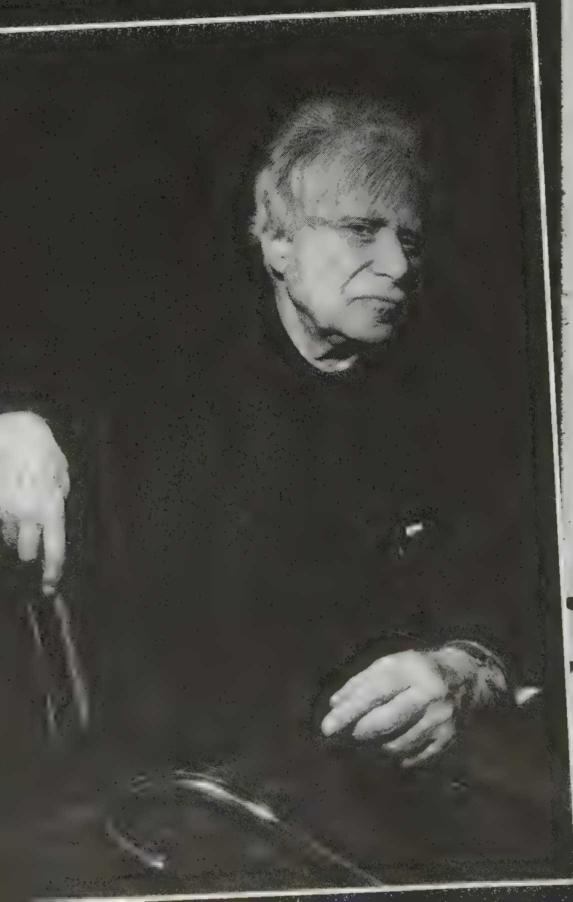
your girlfriend, "She left me, she was only twelve years old."

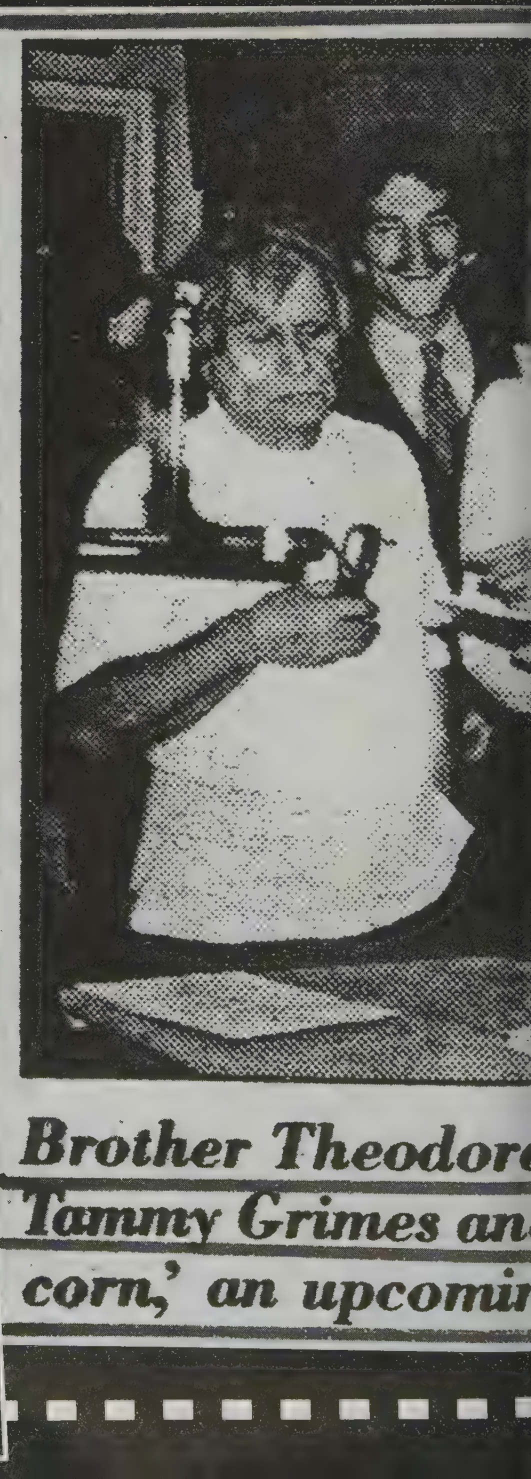
You see my life story is so complex and so unbelievable I sometimes have the feeling that people believe I make it up, that I have a very vivid imagination. That is not so.

Oh this is all very believable. It's a pretty complicated little planet we live on. You can run into one person and the entire course of your history is changed.

Meeting Orson Welles must've been overwhelming almost. And then you find out that someone like that really is just a person. They have problems, they have fights with people, they have to go to the bathroom, they have to eat. And they have to fight with Hollywood.

Orson Welles was only twenty-eight when I met him and he was already very famous. He got famous at the age of sixteen or



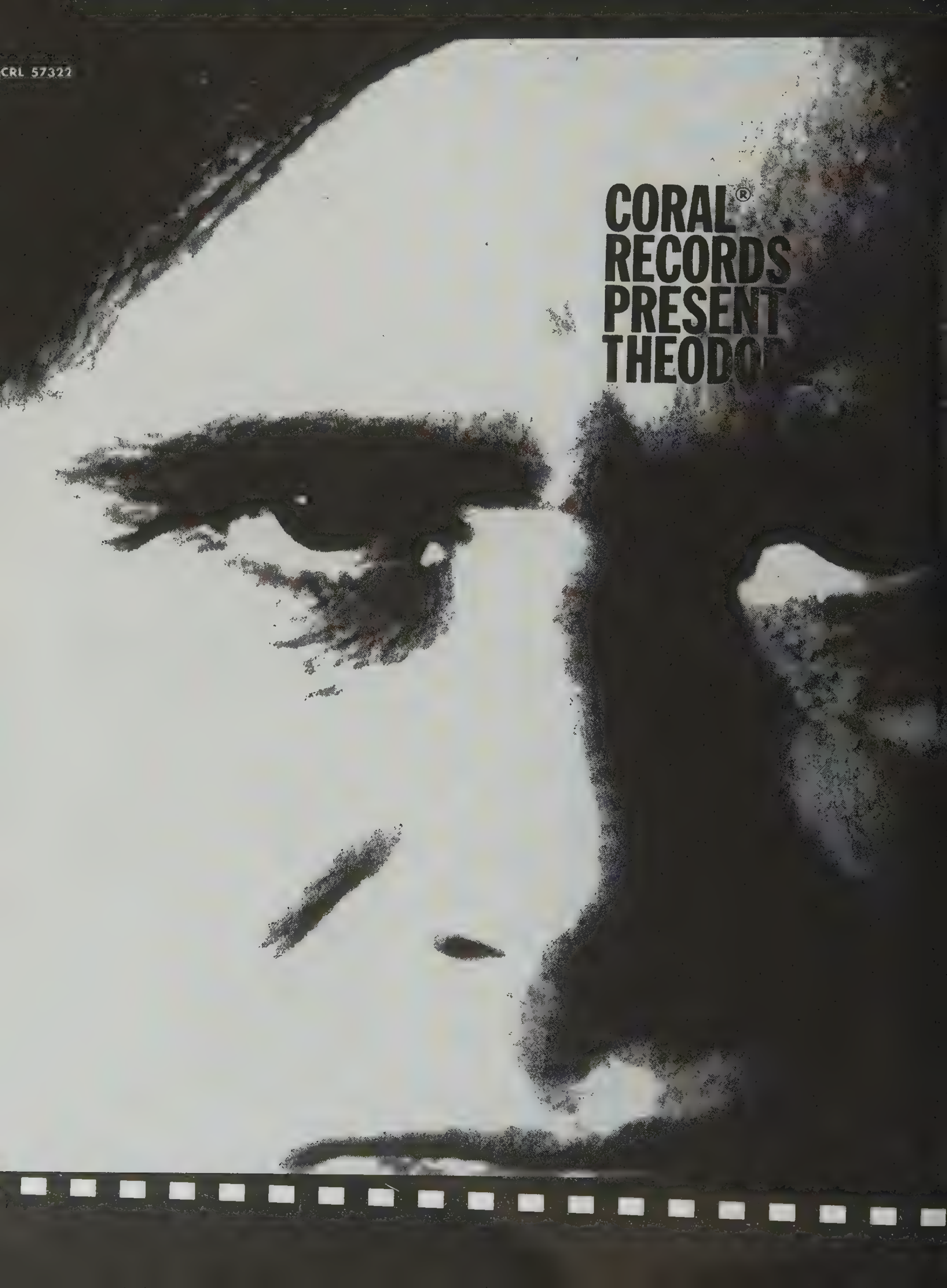


Brother Theodor
Tammy Grimes an
corn,' an upcomi

guaranteed to get you back into the wate
GUMS
"A class A parody of 'JAWS'... Side-splitting absurdity abounds." HUSTLER
"Sex-crazed mermaid Terri Hall gives the best ever." PLAYBOY
"GUMS"
Starring TERRI HALL & BROTHER THEODORE

), Angela Lansbury, Mia Farrow,
Arkin vocalize for 'The Last Uni-
toon with music by Jimmy Webb.

Previous page: Brother Theodore portrait by photographer wowe.
This page, inset: Theodore as Captain Carl Clitoris in the porn spoof *Gums*.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THEODO

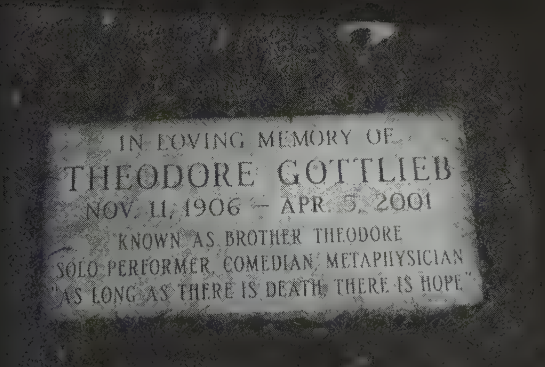
seventeen. When I met him he was already very very very big. He was very famous.

He wanted me to play a very good part with a very good script. He gave me an eight-hour screen test with him directing the screen test and being my partner. And then he had to talk to Sam Spiegel, a big producer in Hollywood.

Although Orson thought I was fabulous his producer didn't like me at all and my Hollywood career was also cut short. I spent four or five years in Hollywood before I came to New York.

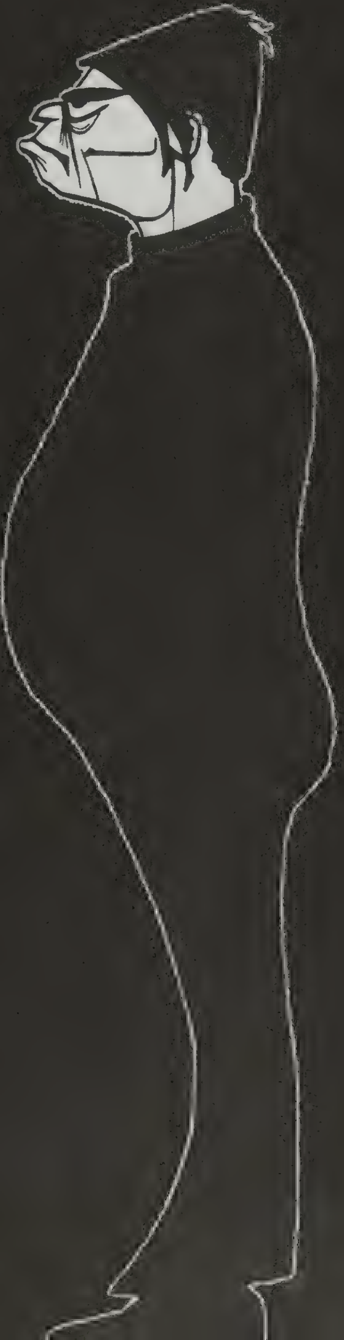
I want to stop here, otherwise, you will be writing a book. I don't want a book written.

How did you become Brother Theodore?
I was known as just Theodore before Merv Griffin. I used to wear a black outfit with a white shirt and Merv Griffin asked me if I was a man of the cloth because I looked like a priest. He asked if he could call me Father O'Malley. I said my name was Theodore and he asked if he could call me Rabbi Theodore but we settled on Brother Theodore.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
THEODORE GOTTLIEB
NOV. 11, 1906 – APR. 5, 2001
KNOWN AS BROTHER THEODORE
SOLO PERFORMER, COMEDIAN, METAPHYSICIAN
"AS LONG AS THERE IS DEATH THERE IS HOPE"

You mentioned that you have a son?
My child is now older than you are. My wife divorced and married my only friend in America. My son is not brought up by me, he does not have my name. When he was one-year-old my wife divorced me due to my insane possessiveness and jealousy—because women have always been my only passion. I never smoked or drank or took drugs. It's intelligent, sensitive, beautiful women who have always dictated my life.



Teller in *Penn & Teller Get Killed.*

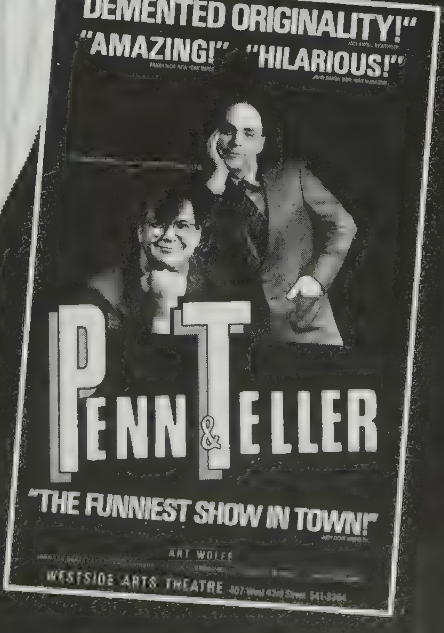
TELLER

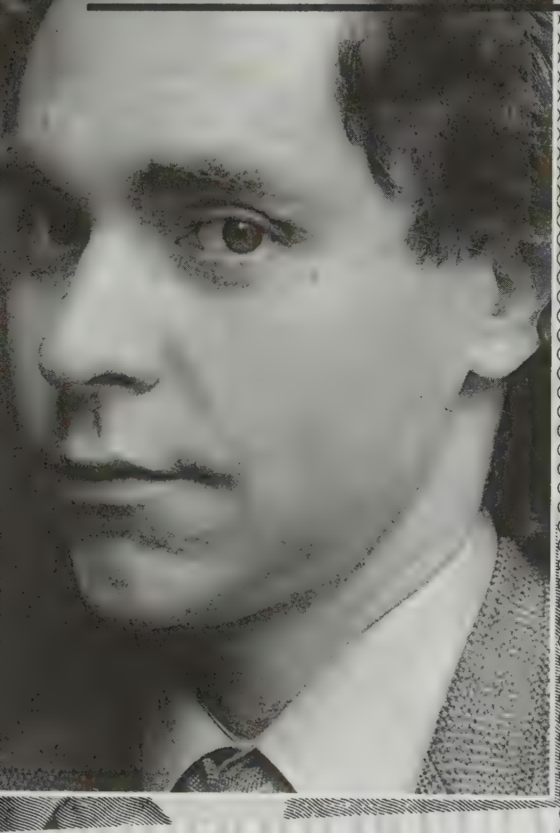
NOW WHO WOULDA THUNK

that one half of a successful thinking-man's magic duo would purchase a zine of strong ideas called The Hoover Hog, read an effusive paragraph-long review of Funeral Party, order a copy, pass it on to his silent-performing partner, who would then write an email, make acquaintance, and be interviewed for Screem magazine? Amazing, but true!

That conversation has been one of the strongest-idead experiences I've had in terms of brain change. After that meeting I ceased belief in all things except the experiential world. And felt freer than I ever had in my life. Both Penn and Teller are both extremely well-endowed in the brain region and a dialog with either may be hazardous to poor thinking and fuzzy logic. Well before the advent of the heavy-duty hammer of their 'realize reality' show Bullshit, Teller… talked.

"And let me tell you, the publicity that we got out of it was not exactly good."


"DEMENTED ORIGINALITY!"
"AMAZING!"
"HILARIOUS!"
PENN & TELLER
"THE FUNNIEST SHOW IN TOWN!"
ART WOLFF
WESTSIDE ARTS THEATRE



SHADE RUPE: When did you guys begin performing together in public?
TELLER: The summer of 1975.

Are there any records of any of that stuff? Any videotapes or films?
No. Aside from some short TV clips from our three-man show in the first ten years. We started off as a trio.

Who was the third?
Penn and I met through a mutual friend, somebody that I went to college with. He was in the music department, and subsequently became a stereo salesman, and sold a stereo to Penn. A very wonderfully funny guy named Wier Chrisemer.

Wier was, at that time, living in Massachusetts. I believe he was living in Northampton. I had gone to college at Amherst College where Wier had gone, and Penn had been brought up locally in Greenfield, Massachusetts, which is just a couple of miles away.

Wier was giving these marvelous concerts of an organization which he entitled the Othmar Schoeck Memorial Society for the Preservation of Unusual and Disgusting Music.

Now, you should know Othmar Schoeck was a turn-of-the-century romantic Swiss composer of very nearly no merit whatsoever.

Why do you say that?
The music is deadly dull and very loud and boring. Although, considering your interests, Othmar Schoeck's most famous work might be something you would want to have in your collection. His most famous work is called Buried Alive, a major orchestral piece which accompanies a tenor singing about the experience of being buried alive.

It has actual lyrics, then?
Yes, it has actual lyrics, in German. It's a very long and excruciatingly dull piece of romantic music. You'd think that you'd get a little more out of getting buried alive. "And now I feel the earth hitting the top of my coffin" sort of lyrics.

Wier engaged Penn and me at various times to assist him in various ways in his performances, which were very large-scale extravaganzas, magnificent things, usually involving a huge orchestra and lots of musicians. Considerable work went into each of these.

Were these self-financed, or was he supported?
They were basically self-financed and also volunteer populated. He would do things like he would stage the closing movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, with the chorus dressed as waiters and waitresses serving a full-course meal to the soloists during the performance. For which I would come in and would basically direct that scene. I would work out who would bring what course at what time.

Were you acting almost as a conductor doing this? Were you in front?

No, I was the person backstage making it happen. And figuring out the sequence of events. Because Wier had plenty to do to try to get the musicians to play the thing correctly.

He was apt to do beautiful arrangements of things like the Minuet In G For Tuned Trash Cans. The wonderful thing about Wier's stuff is that even though it was very surprising and very witty, it always sounded incredibly good and revealed to you something about the music.

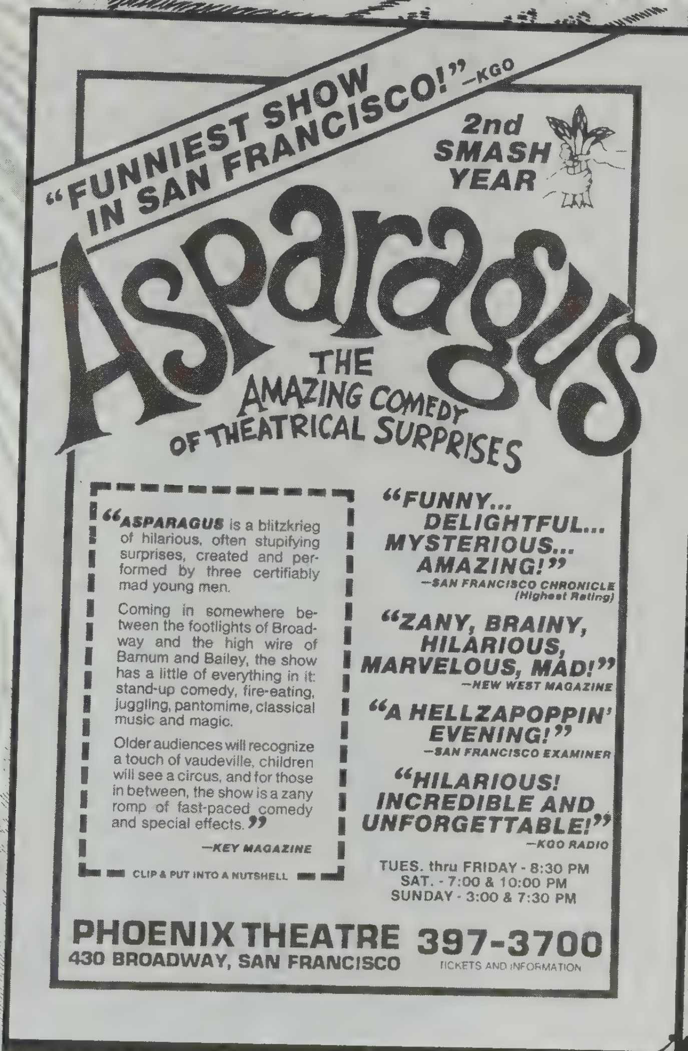
The Minuet In G, for example, when played on tuned trash cans, also included a trio of tubas, so the bass line, 'bom bom bom' was being played on trash cans, and the 'd'wahm, d'wahm' was this massive tuba sound so it had a very elephantine quality to it. His stuff would always sound great at the same time that you were very amused at the way it was being performed.

He had me in several different capacities. Once to deliver a very long, very ponderous poem about the physical conception of Othmar Schoeck. I still remember fragments of it: "Mighty oaks, so wise men say, from minute acorns, all must grow, not trees alone, but oaks of harmony as well must spring from microscopic germ engendered, so Othmar Schoeck from sperm and egg to oak, from acorn to composer sprang." It proceeds from there to be a hymn to the sperm that fathered Othmar Schoeck.

On other occasions I was simply selling pencils as a blind man outside the theater. Othmar Schoeck souvenir pencils, of course. He had a tremendous amount of wonderful Othmar Schoeck merchandise, all of which were unlikely things like blind men's pencils.

For one of these concerts he had engaged Penn to ride a unicycle and juggle plumber's plungers as a sort of dance number to accompany Khachaturian's Sabre Dance.

And that's actually the first time I ever met Penn. This was 1974.



"FUNNIEST SHOW IN SAN FRANCISCO!" —KGO

2nd SMASH YEAR

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Older audiences will recognize a touch of vaudeville, children will see a circus, and for those in between, the show is a zany romp of fast-paced comedy and special effects."

—KEY MAGAZINE

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"ZANY, BRAINY, HILARIOUS, MARVELOUS, MAD!"
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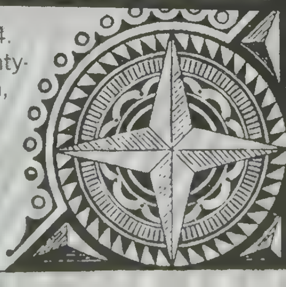
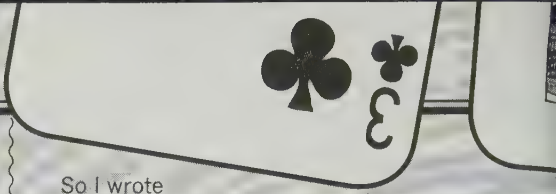
From Asparagus to Las Vegas.

I had just turned twenty-six when I first met Penn, and he had just turned nineteen.





Penn was not a student in your classroom, then?
That's correct. He was never a student of mine. And glad I am of it. I think he would have been a very formidable student to have in a class.

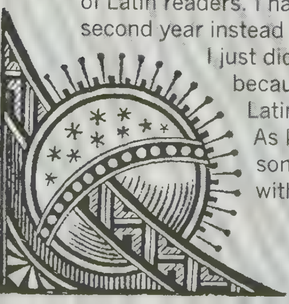
Penn had grown up next door to the world-renowned juggler, Michael Moschen. Michael Moschen is now regarded as the supreme artiste among jugglers; he has done some just glorious stuff unlike anything you've ever seen with juggling. Turning it into dance and music in spectacular ways.

He does one piece where he stands in a triangle of plywood surfaces; a combination of juggling and bouncing the balls off the plywood surfaces, which are very resonant, so it becomes this musical composition at the same time that it's just a dazzling piece of physical goings-on.

Penn and Michael teamed up for a couple of years after I had met Penn initially, and became a juggling team, trying to work places like amusement parks, like Great Adventure in New Jersey. They needed a name, so they asked me and I called on my Latin background and suggested that they name themselves The Tumescoes. Which is Latin for "I get an erection." I just thought it would be very nice at an amusement park to have a large banner reading 'tumesco', "I am having a hard-on," right there in front of the public.

While Penn was living in New York, he was, I must say, living in truly the worst neighborhood I've ever walked into. You thanked your lucky stars that the Hell's Angels patrolled the neighborhood. It was a frightening neighborhood.

I was, at this point, a schoolteacher in Trenton, New Jersey, teaching Latin to secondary-school students, and having a jolly good time at it, too. I always managed to have a jolly good time. I wrote three levels of Latin readers. I had them reading Virgil second year instead of fourth. Basically I just did whatever I wanted, because no one took the Latin curriculum seriously. As long as the kids learned something, I could get away with murder.



So I wrote textbooks full of humor and violence, but in Latin, so to enjoy the pleasure of the humor and violence, the kids had to learn their vocabulary words.

On weekends, once in a while, I'd come up to New York and visit Penn, and take him out to Molfeta's, a Greek restaurant on 47th Street. I think it was about that point that Penn began associating the idea of eating regularly, with me. Something which is a foundation of our partnership.

Were you already playing with your food then?
Oh, no, that's a very recent development, comparatively speaking. Except I was eating needles in those days, something that I persist in doing today. It's based on a very old thing brought over to England in 1813 by an Indian conjurer named Khia Khan Khruse.

He brought over this little stunt that he was fond of doing, where he'd swallow ten cast-iron needles and a few feet of horsehair thread, and then bring the needles up threaded. It became a popular sideshow item, which Houdini picked up and made much grander by swallowing forty needles and using twenty feet of thread, a piece that he did throughout his entire career.

When I was a teenager, I saw a photograph of Houdini doing the needles and thought, This is a wonderful plot! I devised my own way of doing it. You have to proceed very gingerly when you're doing things like swallowing needles, and I've been doing it ever since. That's the extent to which I was playing with my food at the time.

In the spring of 1975, Penn and Wier called me up and asked, "What would you think about doing show business?" And I said, "When are you talking about?" And Penn said, "We'd like to start by doing a summer program at the Minnesota Renaissance Festival," and I said, "When does that happen?" And he said, "August 26th through October 15th."

And I said, "Well, geez, that's when school starts." And Penn said, "Yes, that's what I'm talking about." He was talking about changing careers. I had taught for six years and had tenure. I ruminated on it for a while,

and thought I'd hedge my bets and took a year's leave of absence from teaching, which turned permanent.

The three of us started our first show, which was called The Asparagus Valley Cultural Society. We had our premiere performance of it at the Princeton University Theater Intime, for which we did a publicity stunt, The Asparagus Penn's Unicycle Leap for Life, which was a catastrophic publicity stunt. We ended up losing a lot of money, damaging five cars, and carting Penn off to a hospital in an ambulance covered with human spit.

This happened with one unicycle?
Yes, one unicycle. And it was a publicity stunt. And let me tell you, the publicity that we got out of it was not exactly good.

But you got publicity.
We did, although I can't say that it sold a single damn ticket. Nevertheless, we got the show mounted there. And from there, we proceeded to struggle. That's what you do, you struggle. You try to find bookings for the show and you try to get better at doing the material.

We worked everywhere we possibly could. Any place that would have us, we did shows. Penn and I did a lot of street work in Philadelphia, supporting Asparagus Valley somewhat by doing six street shows a day down by New Market, which was somewhat of a resurrected colonial area of the town.

What was it about asparagus that attracted you to using it as part of your act's title?
We met in what was at that time the Asparagus Valley, that is, the valley where asparagus is most widely grown. It's now transferred, in the last twenty years or so, to California, but the area around Northampton and West Massachusetts used to be considered the Asparagus Valley. And 'Cultural Society' just struck us as amusing.

From a couple of the titles of your performances, it seems like somewhat of an air of a society or a culture was something that you wanted broadcast. Maybe because of the hilarity of your own shows, contrasted with the title.
We've always thought of ourselves in a slightly highfalutin way.

You deserve to. But, you never come across as looking at the audience and saying, "Hi, we're smarter than you." You're not going to stand there and use the largest words you can find.
We would also never take that attitude toward the audience. There is never a hint of 'we're smarter than you', in our shows, ever. Penn is extremely interested in science, so he's very apt to use technical terms side by side with rap terms, side by side with whatever Latin and Greekisms he's picked up from me.

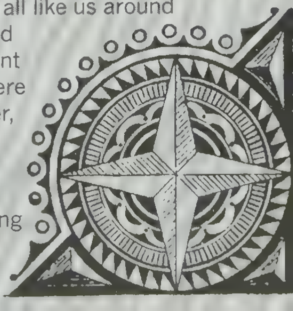
The vocabulary of our show is quite eclectic, because that's the way poetry works. Read Ezra Pound. Ezra Pound would use the best word, and if the best word didn't happen to be an English one, well, too bad.

Penn's very apt to do something a little less obscure, in the sense that he's more apt to use words drawn from the real world of, say, the last hundred years. Whereas Ezra Pound would not be reluctant to use his favorite word out of Sophocles side by side with his favorite beatnik word.

We steer very clear of really ever talking down to the audience. We assume that the audience is very bright and treat them accordingly. It doesn't mean that we don't make jokes about portions of the culture that we think are pretty dumb. God knows there's lots of dumb stuff around.

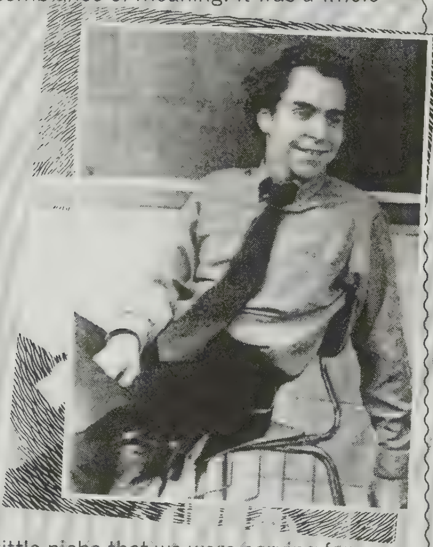
How did Asparagus Valley become Penn & Teller?
Asparagus Valley gradually acquired an audience. We actually got reviewed by newspapers as if we were a serious theater show. Which we were, in our way.

There was nothing at all like us around at the time. The so-called New Vaudeville movement hadn't begun. But we were realizing that in a theater, skills really count for something. That it had been a lot of time since anyone had done anything



in a theater except basically talk and act and sing and dance.

In legitimate theater you hadn't seen skills like juggling knives, you had never seen a magic trick as a piece of drama. You had never seen any of this done with any semblance of meaning. It was a whole new little niche that we were carving for ourselves.



The show became very successful in Philadelphia and the producer there thought it would be a good move to see if we could do a really long run in some highly touristed town like San Francisco. So he hired us out a little 153-seat theater in San Francisco called the Phoenix, which was formerly a strip joint on Broadway. Broadway there means you walk past Carol Doda's place, and past the various kinds of live sex shows to get to the Phoenix Theater where Asparagus Valley played for 965 performances. At the end of 965 performances we had sort of exhausted that vein.

Wier was coming to his senses and realized that he wanted something of a life, rather than show business life. He wanted some stability and some measure of security. So we split and Wier became a member of respectable society. Still a hilariously funny person, and a dear guy, and a good friend of mine and of Penn's.

Were you called Teller back at the beginning of this?

Oh, yeah. I've been Teller forever. I went to an all-boys high school and an all-men's college, where calling your friends by their last names was the standard thing to do. With other people it seemed to fade away, but with me it just seemed to fit. I really kind of embraced it.

It showed up on my business cards for my little magic shows that I did off on the side in my pre-professional-showbiz days. There's a rule I discovered: The more beautiful your business card, the less work you do. It's almost invariably true. You find amateurs who have these stunning business cards with four colors and all sorts of designs and gloss and god knows what on them.

And I was not an exception. I had an exceedingly beautiful business card depicting a nice silent sphinx, with my address and single name, and 'Legerdemain' on it. Now that I make my living as a performer, I don't have a business card at all.

Were you ever a speaking member of the troupe?

Before I knew Penn, when I was in college, I got it into my head that a good performance involving magic told its own story, and let the audience itself decide what was going on. The patter of magicians is mostly redundant. Most magicians say, "Here I have a red ball, now I'm putting it into my left hand. Now, behold, it has turned green." There is a not a word of that that couldn't be dispensed with, because the audience can see every bit of that.

I was intrigued by the fact that there was a visual, visceral level behind every magic trick that could tell its own story, if you just let it. So I began to experiment when I was in college in working without talking. I actually conned the drama department into hooking me up with a college professor and we called our project 'The Figure of the Magician in Dramatic Literature,' to get it past the authorities.

This professor came in and watched me work on the magic act and gave suggestions.

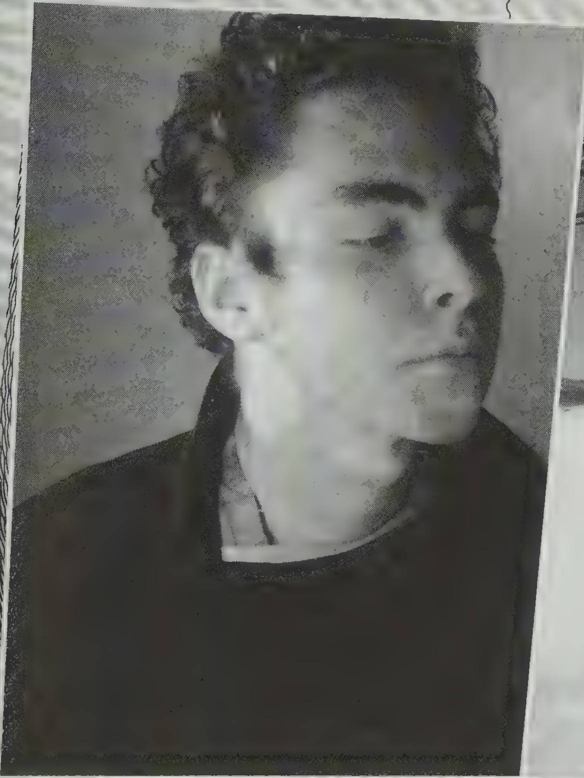
The actual product was very inept, because it was insufficiently rehearsed and insufficiently performed. There's really only one way to get good at stuff and that's to do it. You can sit and think about it all you want, which is something that I did a tremendous amount of in those days, but nothing is a substitute for infinite amounts of rehearsal or infinite amounts of performance.

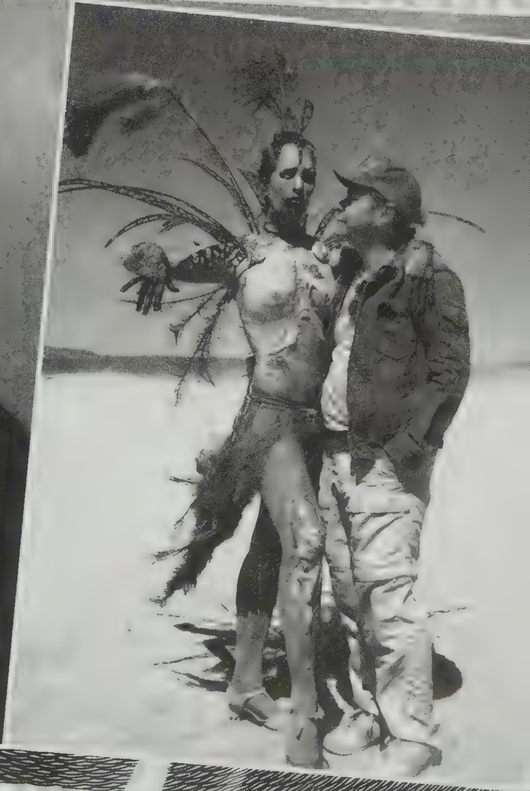
At the same time, I was actually doing gigs for local fraternity parties. I would find that if I went in and tried to shout down the riot in the room and get the attention I needed to do the show, nobody would pay any attention. They would just go on screwing in a corner.

If I came in and doused all the lights except a couple of lawn spots, and directed the lawn spots at me, and then didn't say anything, but just started to do these things, people were intrigued. I found that I had a knack for conveying ideas through action and acting and writing.

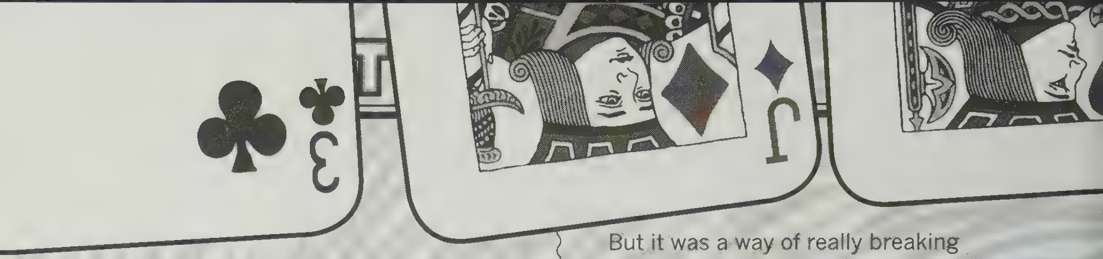
And it worked. I would go in, douse the lights, throw the lawn spots on me, and start to perform without talking, and lo and behold, they would momentarily stop fucking in the corner. They'd set down their cups of beer and remove their hands from one another's body parts. The girlfriends would be a bit alarmed, but nevertheless I would be able to do a show and actually get some applause.

I was swallowing razor blades a lot in those days. I remember doing this act, in character, as a kid playing with his father's shaving mug. I'd chew off the handle of the shaving mug and then swallow the razor blades and bring them all up and be





Previous page: Teller in his teaching days. This page: A teen Teller, and [right] with friend from Frank Ippolito and Ezekiel Zabrowski's movie *& Teller 2*. Photo Frank Ippolito.



short one razor blade and the handle of the shaving mug, which was in the shape of a hand, which then would appear in my lips with the remaining razor blade.

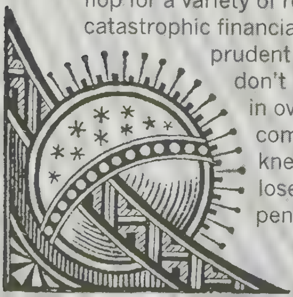
Are you listed on your driver's license as Teller?
Yes, it's my full legal name. I made a full legal name change around 1975 or 1976, in California, when we were playing out there.

When did you perform in San Francisco?
We performed in San Francisco from 1978-1981. We began by mounting a show called Mrs. Lonsberry's Seance of Horror. There's a theme that has been with us, and is still with us, in our shows, that it really is possible for non-believers and non-religious people to address eternal subjects like death in very satisfactory ways. It's possible to take all of the beautiful, ritualistic elements of a seance and enjoy them as part of something that doesn't require belief in the supernatural.

You'll see that even in our current show. We have a tribute to Houdini in the form of a seance, which we never say is a seance, and which we completely expose and disprove at the end. Just imagine all the ritual and splendor of the Catholic church, but instead turned to celebrating rational ends. You have something that particularly fascinates us.

The principal character in Mrs. Lonsberry's Seance of Horror was an elderly woman who is a reformed spirit medium, who no longer believes and no longer thinks it's a good idea to believe, and who was in her day a trickster.

It was a show that Penn and I wrote together. I performed as Mrs. Lonsberry's son, Penn directed, and it was a catastrophic flop for a variety of reasons. It wasn't catastrophic financially, because we're very prudent business guys and we don't allow ourselves to get in over our heads when it comes to business. We knew exactly what we could lose on it and we lost every penny of that.



But it was a way of really breaking away from the Asparagus Valley stuff. The Asparagus Valley was very non-controversial, sort of good-natured and happy. The Seance was perhaps a bit message-heavy, the philosophy was imbued in every word with a sledgehammer.

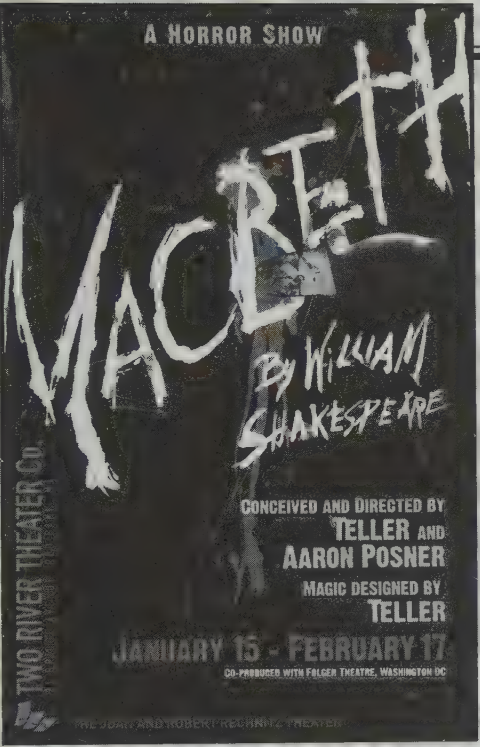
Were you installed in one theater and performing every night?
It was a show that we toured every night. We played at movie theaters after they were closed.

Were you finding people who had attended your shows previously, showing up and not being as entertained, with the message of the new show?
I don't really know exactly what wasn't right. It felt to me as though it was very right in many regards. I'm not sure we had the right casting; I'm not sure I was the right person to play the son, or the woman we hired as an actress was the right person to play Mrs. Lonsberry. Both of them were very difficult roles, and I'm not sure that we found exactly the right people to play them.

Penn himself would admit that probably he's not the ideal character for a director. I'm a more directorial type and he's a more performer type. But he just couldn't do the role of the son because it required somebody physically smaller.

In my experience so far in show business I've learned to say there are times when things work, and there are times when they don't. You can beat your brains out trying to figure out what didn't work about something, and you can beat your brains out trying to sell something that doesn't work. And it won't work if it doesn't work.

It's that thing for which they use the metaphor 'chemistry'. When all the ingredients are right, the thing works. And when they're not right, the thing doesn't work. And there's not much point in really trying to fix something that is fundamentally not working.



You and Penn wrote your own script for Penn & Teller Get Killed.

We sat in a room and we wrote the screenplay. Arthur Penn came in and helped make the story much better. We had a lot of scenes that didn't quite add up. Arthur helped us focus on what we were really after.

Was there any sort of joke having a director with the last name was 'Penn'?

No, I'll tell you the uncanny story. Bernie Brillstein is a Hollywood mogul who produced several movies and The Garry Shandling Show. At the time he was the head of Lorimar Films. Our agent was Sam Cohn at ICM. He sold the movie idea to Lorimar.

They asked us who we wanted to direct the film and we came up with Truffaut and Hitchcock. Truffaut was a fan of ours and we asked him but he was in the process of making Au Revoir Les Enfants.

We didn't really have an idea who we wanted to direct it. We thought over the movies we had seen over the previous year that we really liked and among them we thought, Wasn't there a wonderful, really strange, interesting movie called Dead of Winter?

We were sitting in Sam Cohn's office waiting for him to come in and we looked at a big book behind his desk and found that Arthur Penn had directed it. When we looked at the list of movies Arthur had directed, we realized that we had been fans of Arthur for a long time without really knowing all these movies we loved were directed by the same person.

It's hard to imagine that each of these movies, so distinctive and different from one another, are all directed by the same person. But it seems to be Arthur's career policy never to repeat himself. The movie industry is full of people trying to carve comfortable niches. Arthur is a rebel: each film is a totally fresh start, a new idea.

And we thought: Like Arthur Penn is going to direct our movie, right. Sam Cohn walks into the office and sits down and says, "I think I have the guy for your movie." And we go, "Yeah? Who?" And he says, "Arthur Penn." He says, "Arthur Penn has been looking for an interesting project, and I just sent him your script and he's very intrigued with it."

It was rather a chilling coincidence. When we met him, we were immediately struck by his unpretentiousness, his clarity, his guts, his experience; it was thrilling. Arthur's effect on our lives was enormous, because we associated with him during pre-production, production and post-production for the movie, which, you know, comprises the better part of a year by the time you're done with it all.

Arthur's very wise. He started off in television doing Playhouse 90—type shows and then was sort of really right with Alice's Restaurant and Bonnie and Clyde right in the midst of that whole period of time when our culture was changing gears completely. And he has continued to do amazingly brave things.

The most recent thing he did, which I recommend highly, is called Inside. It was presented on Showtime but it's getting some limited theatrical release. It's set in both the midst of apartheid in South Africa and in current-day South

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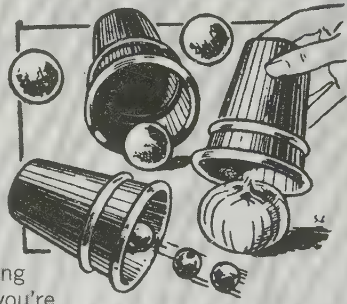
Program from Teller's *Macbeth*, 2008.

Africa. It's a very tough, powerful, scary, intense movie.

Well, for Teller to say that, I take that as a recommendation.

Yeah, it's really a fine movie, and it has an image in it that you'll just never, ever forget. A prison image that you'll never, ever forget, that is insisted upon, and it's very, very creepy.

We met Arthur and absolutely, completely fell in love with him. He understood what was good in our screenplay, he understood what was not good in our screenplay, he just understood moviemaking.



The thing that I saw him do, that I now most consciously emulate, is trying to make a judgment when you're out on a shoot, or when you're involved with something, about how much time you're spending on any given item. Arthur makes it a point to spend only the amount of time that a particular shot really warrants. If he judges that this is a very unimportant, quick transitional scene, instead of doing what other directors would do, which is to shoot coverage. You shoot Person A and Person B, and a wide shot, an establishing shot, a two-shot, and little close-ups. Arthur will get it quickly in a single two-shot and say, Okay, let's move on.

Why? Because he knows that at the end of the shoot he has a very complicated sequence to do. He left an entire week to do the closing sequence, the upside-down right-side-up ending of the movie; an entire week on the set to shoot that. He earned himself that week by not wasting time on little transitional scenes that were just two people talking.

The other things that I learned from him, which really made a difference in Penn's and my relationship, were about when a director needs to say something to help an actor in some way. Arthur said, "I have found that it is best that no matter what you are thinking at any given moment, don't say it right away, but wait."

Because the chances are, if an actor is working on a character, there are lots of things in this actor's head. He's trying to put them all together. And if you come in and say, "Why don't you do it this way?" it'll throw the actor off, because the actor isn't ready for that information yet. But if you wait you will find that most performers, most actors, will sooner or later come to the point where they need that piece of information. And then, when you determine that they're really ready for it, then that's the time that you tell them that.

Honestly, I used to drive Penn crazy, because I work from the outside in, and he works from the inside out. I'm inclined to figure out where I'm standing on stage, when I'm turning, when I'm doing this or that action, before I really get down to the inside stuff, the emotional, if you will, part of the experience. Penn is the exact opposite. Penn works from the idea to the word and then eventually to externalizing it into action.

We'll be in a situation where I'll see Penn in a particular position on the stage and I'll say to myself, "You know that probably isn't the best place for him to stand for him to deliver that particular line. He should be sitting for that." If at that point I say to Penn, "Why don't you do this sitting down?" it completely disrupts his train of thought. It's just like taking a sledgehammer to a delicate glass structure that he's trying to erect.

Because that's the last step in his creative process, and it's one of the first in mine. Incidentally, Penn will probably find himself sitting down exactly where I wanted him to sit down. But he has to get to it in his own creative sequence, and not mine. Mine would be, "Sit yourself down at the table and it'll help you think." Well, that's not the way he works.

Arthur Penn knows very much how to direct. He knew exactly what to do to make me do the stuff that I needed to do. My favorite comedic moment is in the film noir

sequence where we're holed up in a motel room. Penn's composing this very film noir memoir, and as he's writing, I come in the door and kick the door closed behind me.

I am a rehearser. I practiced that ninja stuff for like six weeks to get it absolutely, perfectly smooth. I came in the door on the second take and really wanted to do it right.

I came in the door and kicked the door in such a way as to accidentally clip myself on the back of the head with the edge of the door. And I thought, "He's not calling cut yet, I'll just go on with the scene." I went through the scene and kept apologizing to Arthur and said I would do it again and he said, "Well, Teller, by all means. I'll let you do it as many times as you want, but I assure that's the take we're using." Because he knew it was funny.

A lot of times actors, who have not been directed before, will say, "Oh, what do I do now? What do I do now? Where do you want me to be?" Whereas someone, if they're a professional, they know how to walk. They read the script, they walk in, they show the director what they've come up with.

What I learned to do was hit marks. I certainly learned to hit marks in that film. I didn't really know anything about hitting marks before. But, boy, by the end, you knew that you could rely on Teller

Penn & Teller preparing for eternal slumber, or at least until the worms eat them. Photo Anthony Loew.

to ask for a sandbag where he needs the sandbag, so he could get his marks without looking at his feet.

There's the scene with Tom Sizemore, where you're under the overpass by the beach, by the pier. Those two characters, they don't appear elsewhere. It's this extra scene written for Teller, it seemed. One of those scenes where it didn't seem to go with the rest of the plot. What was it about that scene that made you want to write it and then film it and include it in the film?
In many ways the crux of the movie is in that scene. The movie is about two guys who start to slip and don't continue to make the distinction between make-believe and reality, their stock in trade. In the form of an elaborate plot, we lose track and start to carry real guns.

It's the buying of the gun that is the real turning point. That scene happens right after I buy the gun. The major thing that the scene shows is that I have not lost my mind yet. I have the gun there, and two people are threatening me, and I could kill them. But I choose not to.

At that point, I'm still a good guy, and good guys don't kill people. They just don't. Even though they may have the ability to right at their fingertips. Good guys value life and hate death. That's part of what that scene is about. The actual poetic content of it is so intense that I find it a little hard to explain beyond that.

That makes sense. You're thinking, "I'm not going to become part of this." You get back by air-gunning them, blowing your finger, and there you go. You've done what you needed to do.
It's a scene that makes me cry. It really brings tears to my eyes, because it's a very beautiful idea to have power and not exercise it. To have the power of life and death right in your pocket and not use it. A lesser person would crack, but I'm not going to. There's something chilling about that, and really beautiful.

The film has a pretty bizarre ending. I think audiences were jolted when they realized that Penn and Teller were actually getting killed.
That's exactly what I like about it, too. Pretty much anything that we do you find an underlying preoccupation with two guys who are fascinated by the places where make-believe and reality overlap, and who are very

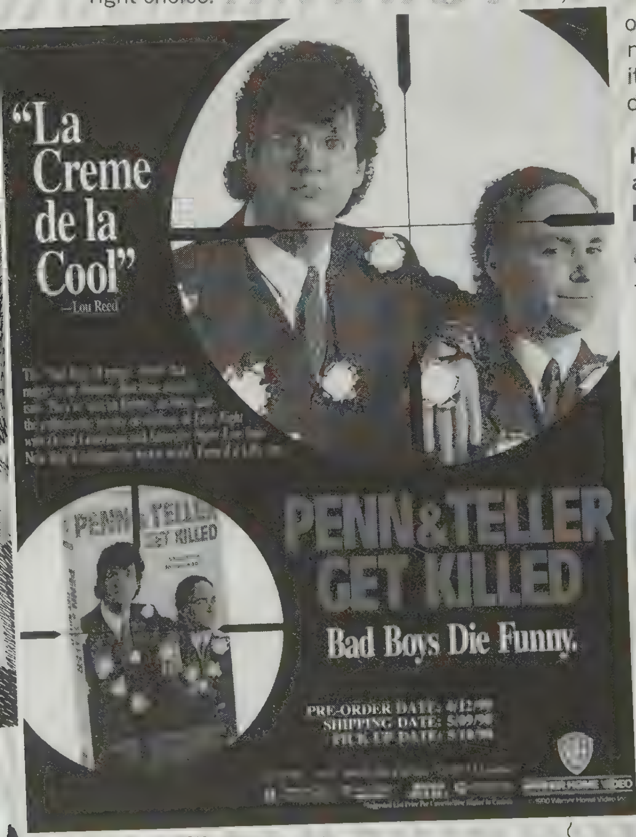
interested sometimes in separating those things, and sometimes in confusing them.

The end of the movie is the place where, in a comedy, everything is supposed to come out just fine. We thought, "Let's give the viewer a tremendous amount of credit for knowing that there's a movie going on. Let's kill ourselves off." Which is so deeply contrary to the rules of melodrama and comedy, it's like an obscenity. Let's do that, but let's do that with just enough of a wink so that people say, "Oh geez! They really killed themselves off."

Surprise! Penn Jillette, Caitlin Clarke, and Teller in *Penn & Teller Get Killed*!

When we first shot it, we didn't think we intended to have the voice-over, but it wasn't quite funny enough. We also originally conceived it as being incredibly gory.

There was no blood. You had no blood.
There's no blood anywhere in that scene. That was a very strong feeling of Arthur's. I remember writing the stage directions: "Teller hangs there dripping blood like a side of beef." But Arthur felt very strongly that if we did that, that would just kill the comedy. So who knows? I think it was probably the right choice.



It's a very bold thing for a publicly well-known celebrity, comic or not, to stare at the camera and say: "I wish someone was trying to kill me." It almost seems that if you do that, it almost takes the power away. Because if you are acting scared or being scared or having fences up, people want to get in.
If you just go ahead and invite them in, I think it takes some of the game out of actually going ahead and doing something like that.

There are a couple of women who have shown up many, many times at the shows, and then traveled from one gig to the next to follow us, whom we now amiably refer to as The Stalkers. We do this to their face. We chat with them, and sometimes we give them a lift to the next gig.

It takes all of the game completely out of it for them and they're just very nice people. If we resisted and made it a challenge, it may be a completely different ballgame altogether.

How did you guys end up in Las Vegas as your choice of residence and performance?
It's mostly a practical matter. We both very much like all the urban centers of the country, and we both very much like New York, where we stayed for ten years. We found that we were being booked about three months out of every single year at Bally's in Las Vegas. Which may surprise you; it certainly shocked the hell out of me. I pictured Las Vegas as really nothing but plumed headdresses and topless women with very compact breasts.

For some unknown reason, we are able to play to the Las Vegas audience. One of the reasons is that the Las Vegas audience is not the old Las Vegas audience. This is no longer your 'gangsters in tuxedos'. This is now the top tourist destination in the country. This is where people bring their families. The whole thing is now a huge theme park.

We have a very wide range of audience. And, as far as I can tell, we have the very same audience that we get on Broadway, that we get in regional theaters, that we get whenever we tour around the country; it's just the same people. People tell us they saw us in 1985 in that little theater on 43rd Street.

This greatly surprised us. But we found that we were playing here more and more frequently, and now we play here three months a year. Mostly thanks to an incredibly smart promoter who used to run the Pennsylvania Ballet, and then for a while he worked for Donald Trump, and now he's running Bally's Entertainment. He has an amazing sense of what surprising choice will go in what surprising venue. He brought the Bolshoi to Las Vegas and sold it out completely all the time. He knew people would want to see it, but he also knew that no one else on the Strip would think of booking somebody who wasn't Paul Anka. He's willing to take the gamble, but it's not much of a gamble, because his judgment is astonishingly good.

We find ourselves playing three months a year at Bally's every single year. That brings us out to this region of the country, and we see that Las Vegas is more than the Strip. Las Vegas is this extremely dramatic city in a desert. And the desert is something that both Penn and I have really fallen in love with.

There's nothing like the light upon the desert, or the nuances of weather and sky. The desert is a stunning environment. It's also an environment that's not difficult to live in. You don't have to shovel it off your sidewalk. You don't slip on it and hurt

Penn & Teller Get Killed.

yourself. You don't have extra time spent trying to get to and from your office.

The economics were extremely favorable. There's no state or city income tax here. All the real estate elements that are important to us, like having a good shop, are very reasonable. Out here, we were able to afford a 5,000-square-foot shop space and office to build props and rehearse. That was a huge luxury. The more we stay here, the more advantages there seem to be.

The place is growing. It's the fastest-growing city in the county. There's some fear that it'll become over-populated and turn into another urban sprawl, but for the present, it's extremely nice.

It's an excellent, excellent climate. It gets very warm in the summer, but it's humidity-free heat. It's like walking through an oven, but it's not unpleasant; you don't sweat and feel miserable. You just go: I can't believe how hot it is! Hand me another bottle of water, please!

I love the Joshua trees in the Mojave Desert. And it is very dry. Even in the winter, it doesn't get cold till night. It's really nice.

When I visited Las Vegas, the whole thing seemed so unreal, with these huge recreations of world monuments. I read there's a new one that recreates New York.

The Las Vegas Strip is the place that residents go only when they have to work there, but it's the neon spine of the city. It's a remarkable thing. It out-Disneys Disney in many, many ways.

Yes, they've built New York, New York, which is an architectural collection of New York landmarks that cluster together in such a way as to form a hotel. With rather a good roller coaster on it.

An actual roller coaster you can ride on?

Oh, yes, an actual roller coaster that you can ride on amongst the tops of the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building, all of which are not really very well reproduced, mind you. But the idea of plunking such a thing in the middle of the desert is so bizarre.

The best piece of architecture in town is the Luxor Hotel. The Luxor is this huge black reflectant pyramid in the shape of the Great Pyramid of Giza. The exterior is covered with a black reflectant glass, so that whatever color the sky happens to be, the pyramid changes color—on an overcast day, the pyramid become gold. On a blue-sky day, the pyramid becomes jet-black.

And in the middle of the top of it is the strongest beam of light on the Earth, that beams straight out to the sky forever. Las Vegas has now officially and technically overtaken Paris as being the brightest city in the world.

Part of what appealed to us about moving here is that it seemed terribly un-chic. Nobody hip would move to Las Vegas. And we felt that makes it hipper than any place else. All you need to do is pick out what everybody says is un-hip, embrace it, and you've got hipdom.

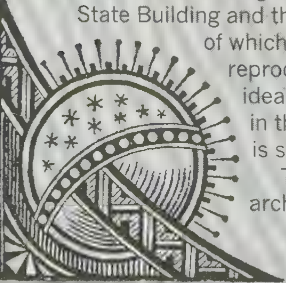
Are you able to find the sort of entertainment and reading material you like?

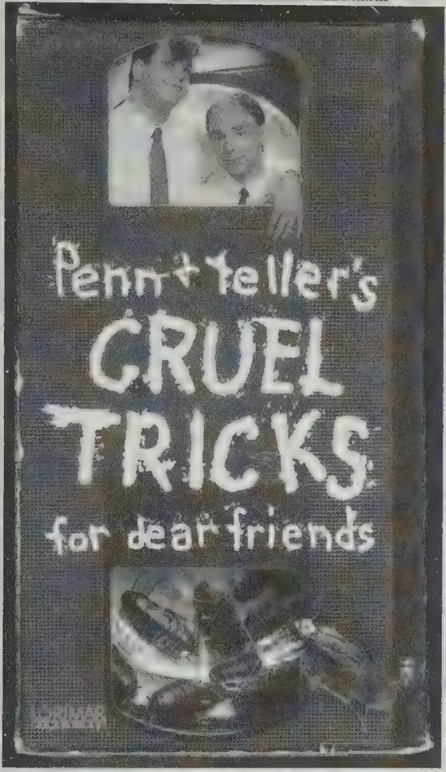
The movie-going fare is limited. It really is middle-America shopping mall movie-going fare. That is something I miss about living in a coastal city. But the fact that L.A. is a one-hour plane flight away makes that less problematic.

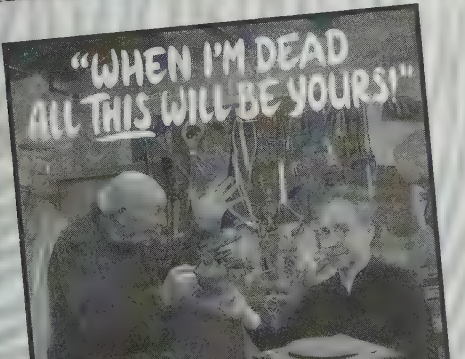
No problem with bookstores. The place is a booming metropolis, so all the usual large new bookstores are here, and there are a couple of quite excellent used bookstores. And the internet is a major help. Any of the major book services online are really better than anything you'll find in any terrestrial city, anyway.

I found that chapter in Cruel Tricks. When I mentioned I found the "success", you said, "There's more to it than that." And I was like "What is there?" So of course I just sat staring at it.

Often, if there's a problem, immediately I start thinking about it in the most complex way possible. Which is almost always incorrect. And then I have to back away from it and go: No. A, B, C. And then it still wasn't working, and I was showing it to people. And I said, "What does this mean?"







Then I saw the sticker. It's like, "Oh, okay, it's a joke. I get it!"
It's an amazingly effective trick. That whole book was our little foray into saying, What do you take for granted about a book? And, consequently, how can we fuck with you? You can see how many things are built into the physical piece.

It's amazing. It's grand. It is a book. It's bound. But it works on so many levels, so much is shoved in there. The red ink trick, the flipping back and forth, the way you have all the pages sandwiched in between larger pages.
There's the special feature where the pages are shaved to allow you to show a different set of images when you flip through the book from either direction. That was a process that had never been done in mass publication before. It had been done in magicians' basements. They used to do a little trick with a coloring book, where flipping it one way you get one reaction, and one way you get another reaction. But it had never been done as a mass publication before.

I sat down with the production person and I said, "We're going to do this with this book. Let's figure out how to do it." We ended up having to misalign the way two presses feed the paper to the binding machinery. It was something.

I bet they had a good time working with that.
It was amazing that we pulled it off, absolutely amazing. At that time we thought, "Well, this will be our one book. We'll never write another one." So we put into it every book idea that we had ever had. We finished that up and it was rather successful and we thought, "Well, let's do another one. How shall we deal with it this time?"

So we came up with the notion of doing a book all about food. And our current one is all about travel. It's called, How To Play In Traffic.

Are you also including some gimmicks along with it?
Just one. A piece of acetate bound right into the book. You use the acetate as a gimmick to rig a Polaroid camera to take pictures

of your victim's 'guardian vegetable'. But the rest is all book.

The last two times we put out a book people complained that they really wanted to be able to flip through the book in the store. The fact that it was always sealed in a package bothered them a lot. This time we're trying a book that's just a book. But it's got some wonderful things in it.

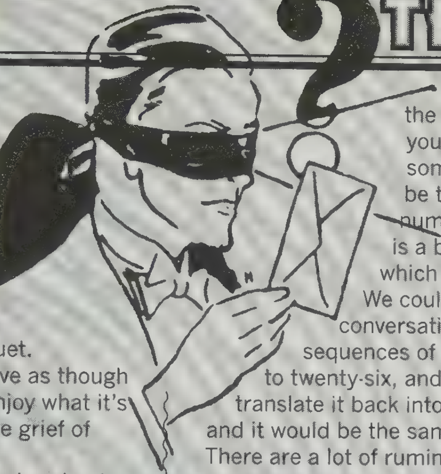
When I was studying Latin, I read tombstone inscriptions. That was one of my very favorite things to do. My favorite tombstone inscription of all time is "Sum Quod Eris." Which means "I Am What You Will Be."

Oh, grand!

It's a delicious thing to think that the dead person gets the last laugh. You're going there through the cemetery, feeling very superior because you're alive and these people are dead, and this one tombstone grins back at you and says, Yeah, so?

For a long time I thought about how we might be able to do something that cool. Some way that we could speak from the dead. And then I got a very simple idea. I thought, How about we have a tombstone made that says: "Penn & Teller—Is This Your Card?" And then we have a three of clubs under that inscription. And then teach people, in our books, how to force the three of clubs so that they can then go to the cemetery and do a card trick whose punchline is right there on the tombstone.

I just thought it would be a wonderful thing because it would mean that we could actually participate in entertaining people long after we're dead.



Have you already bought the plot? Are you guys going to be buried next to each other?
Well, I started to think, Why wait until we're dead to put up the tombstone? If you think about it, in the Petronius Satyricon there's the character Trimalchio who has a big banquet. Trimalchio has everybody behave as though he's just died, so that he can enjoy what it's like after he's dead, enjoying the grief of those who remain after him.

We thought, Why not go ahead and not only buy the plot, but install the tombstone before we die? We danced around the official requirements by making it a cenotaph, which is a commemorative plaque that doesn't have a body buried beneath it.

And then we thought, What is the most tourist-filled cemetery in the country? Well, it's probably Forest Lawn in Burbank, because that's where all the famous silent film stars are buried. You can go up there and stand on Stan Laurel's grave if you want.

We bought a plot in Forest Lawn, we had a bronze cenotaph plaque made, and it is now there waiting for the people who will be reading How To Play In Traffic, who will learn the details of how to find it, and how to do the trick. There is something very beautiful about the whole idea, of enjoying your own grave.

All of the philosophic angles of this are explored in a very funny but thoughtful way. It makes me think of the Ode by Horace that begins "Ex igi monument ira perenius." "I have raised a monument more lasting than bronze." Meaning, "I've written a poem."

Once Horace wrote those words, every time that those words are copied, they are just as completely the work of art as when Horace first wrote them, because that's a digital form of art. Because a poem, being digital, can be copied.

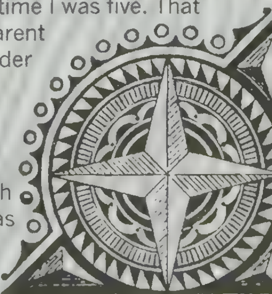
I haven't heard 'digital' used that way.
Digital meaning the art is not limited to a substance. The art is a piece of information that, by learning it, you're reproducing the art in toto. The way the word digital is currently used means that you're turning the information, your art form, into something that can be transformed into numbers. The alphabet is a bunch of symbols which are like numbers. We could translate our conversation entirely into sequences of numbers up to twenty-six, and then we could translate it back into our conversation and it would be the same words.

There are a lot of ruminations in the particular chapter in the book about how even the tombstone won't last forever. But the description in the book—because it's in words, and because there will be thousands of copies of those words both on paper and on computer—is likely to outlast the bronze. So, in a way, the book itself is an even better tombstone.

One thing you like to show in your videotapes and books, is that magic is not magic. There is no special pixie dust that swirls around and this magical thing will happen. Or moving things with your mind. I loved the Exploring Psychic Powers Live show, where everyone from water dowsers to astrologists were unable to find water or guess what Zodiac sign any of the guests were.
Was there any point in your life when you actually wanted to explore psychic phenomena yourself? Or felt that maybe there was some credence to it? Or were you always aware that these events were not occurring, and they were in fact performed by charlatans or people believing things that weren't exactly taking place?

For me, I grew up with a pair of very sane, hard-to-fool parents. Maybe I was part of their training, because I was doing magic tricks for them from the time I was five. That certainly might train a parent to be even saner and harder to fool.

My parents very early on dismissed the idea of religion. My father was from an immigrant Jewish family and my mother was



from a Philadelphia Methodist family. The two sets of parents were absolutely shocked at one another when my parents ran off and eloped.

They've always been the sort of people who want to know how things work. You don't need very much more than that attitude to not come close to believing in a lot of the bullshit stuff. Add to that the fact that really early on I got fascinated with anything connected with spirit mediums and that sort of stuff.

I wanted to figure out how they did the tricks. Probably the largest single individual portion of my library has to do with spiritualism and psychic phenomena, and how those things have been investigated and, to all intents and purposes, proven to be false. There isn't the verifiability of any other science. Anytime there's a strange phenomenon, it's never reproducible. Oh, no, it's never reproducible. It bears all the marks of plain old superstition and bogus thought.

I think back on Dunninger, a 40s and 50s radio and TV mentalist. At the end of his shows, he would put a number into a safe and stare at the TV screen with his fingertips on his temples and concentrate on the number. People were to try to receive the number from Dunninger's broadcast and send in postcards with the right number. And if anyone happened to get the number right, they were to receive a huge amount of money. I don't think anyone ever won.

I remember sitting in the living room and at least giggling over that, trying to receive the number from Dunninger. That's just about the extent of my recollection of any even suspicions of that stuff being anything but goofy.

I liked the Ted Serious scam. He would hold the camera to his head, and go: Ahh! and make these images appear.

We have the Polaroid camera trick in How To Play In Traffic, in which you have your friend think of a random vegetable, and you then declare that this is the person's Guardian Vegetable; that's why they thought of it. They don't tell you what the vegetable is, but you take out your Polaroid camera and take a picture of them. And lo and behold, when the picture develops, the Guardian Vegetable is smiling in the air, floating over their shoulder in the picture. It's a very good magic trick. It's based on exactly that technology.

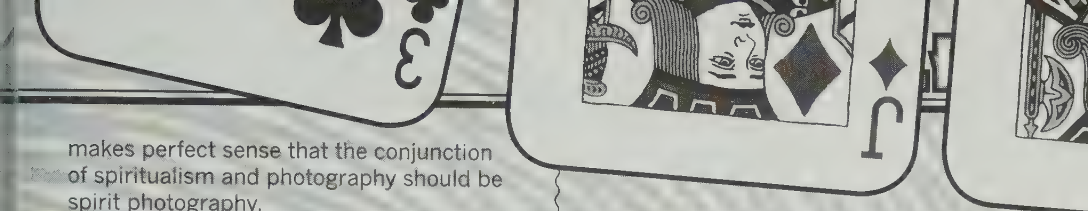
There was a documentary on spiritualism two years ago on PBS, with those two sisters who started the whole thing.

The Fox Sisters.

With the clicking of the toes. They also profiled the photographer who was using prepared plates to make spirits appear behind people.

That's been done almost since the beginning of photography. Spiritualism came into practice around 1848 when the Fox Sisters started the mania. Photography as we know it began at the beginning of the 1800s and was blossoming in the Civil War days so it

THE MOST UNPLEASANT WORLD OF
PENN &
TELLER



makes perfect sense that the conjunction of spiritualism and photography should be spirit photography.

There's always a revival of some form of spiritualism whenever there's a major war because people lose a lot of relatives and there's a lot of money to be made from bereavement. Which is why the big spiritualistic periods were right after the Civil War and right after World War I, which Houdini was so famous for debunking.

You even see it as late as the Vietnam War where you get people with their spirit guides or trance channelers. All of that stuff burgeons in relation to the great many deaths in a war.

For a lot of people, love is the highest attainment of man, and people attribute 'psychic feelings' to their feelings of love for another person.

There's a continuum of love that goes from hysterical passion to friendship to just kindly regard. It seems that all of those things are very productive, if they're not too destructive. It's just a fact that the psychology of human beings is that we are pattern finders.

We don't notice things that don't match up; we notice things that do match up. I have hanging over my desk a quote from Sir Francis Bacon: "The general root of superstition is that men observe when things hit, and not when they miss, and commit to memory the one and pass over the other."

So the thirty times that the phone rings and you say, Geez, I think that's going to be my friend, Phil, and it turns out to be somebody else. That absolutely passes from your memory. It's not a pattern; it's nothing for you to connect with. You dismiss it.

I've actually made it a point to prove this to myself. Say I have dream that somebody's in a terrible airplane accident. I write it down when I happen to wake up and am conscious enough to write it down, just to see if, the following day, the person was in a plane and the plane went down. But instead what happens is, nothing. Ever.

So the telephone rings and today Shade says, Hmmm, I wonder if that could be Teller calling back because his timing was changed for this afternoon? You lift the receiver and it's me saying my time was changed. That one you remember. Because you remember when things hit, and not when they miss.

I've been doing that for years. I pick up the phone and go "Oh, hi, Bob." "Hi, Julie." And they're like, "How did you know it was me?"

I have never thought that I was 'psychic'. It just made sense that this person would call at this time. It always seemed like a bunch of processes that I had worked out, even unknowingly, and this was the result. And occasionally I'm wrong. Now it's gotten a little easier, because I have caller ID.

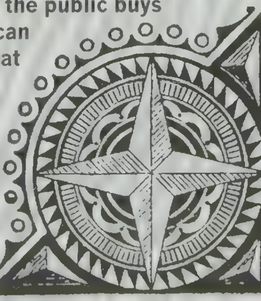
But the fact is, you are an observant enough person that you are able to make reasonable guesses about what's going to happen in the future. And in the case of being able to know: Well, it's 5:30 and Julie just got out of work right now. I bet it's Julie. Boom—Hi, Julie!—bang.

Making that kind of judgment is one of the talents of human beings. But when people conclude from that that they're receiving some sort of fourth-dimensional, fifth-dimensional, seventh-dimensional signals from another plane, then you say: Wait a minute. Isn't it more reasonable to assume that you're a good judge of your friends and when they call, than it is to suddenly decide that all of the current knowledge about physics is wrong?

In the early 80s, I was telling people that ten to fifteen years from now, people are going to be walking around with hunks of metal in their faces, and they're going to raise their flesh up and make big scars. And they said, "Ah, no one's going to go that far." And, look around. It's hip. It's in malls. It's normal. It's not even weird.

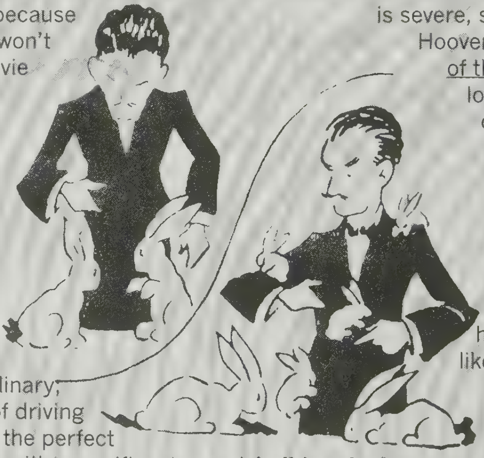
I hope I continue this, because as a creative person, you hope the public buys it, and you hope that you can continue making things that people are going to want.

Right. It's nice if you can get a feel for what's going to make sense to your public.



You were in a film version of The Fantasticks.
The Fantasticks is a movie as yet unreleased in which I play a Shakespearean actor who specializes in death scenes. I get strangled, drowned, stabbed, and shot for laughs. It was great fun to be in, and I got to be pals with Joel Grey, who's the suavest person I've ever met, and Barnard Hughes, who's old as the hills and killingly funny.

I love acting, but don't get invited to audition very much because people seem to think I won't talk in a movie. Any movie directors reading this: I talk. If you're looking for a little moon-faced Peter Lorre type, gimme a call. I even do tolerable German, Southern, and Cockney accents.



You're building a house in the desert.
The location is extraordinary; it took me six months of driving around the area to find the perfect place, high on a hillside with magnificent views east to the Strip at night, south and west to unspoiled mountains, and north to an evil-looking cliff. The side of the house that faces the public is camouflaged to match the desert terrain, like a lizard, and only small slits of windows will look out at the world. The other side, underbelly, as it were, gleams with bright metal scales and glass to catch the northern light.

The heart of the house is a two-storey library, designed to house 6,000 books. The rooms are built along a galleria corridor tapered in forced perspective that ends in a seven-foot-wide, floor-to-ceiling mirrored door set at a forty-five degree angle that reflects a window in such a way as to give the impression that the house ends there at the reflected window; like the classic magician's box trick. Actually the house continues beyond to an indoor pool, an exercise room, and a semi-subterranean bedroom.

There's a room at the top of the house, thirty-eight feet in the air, with walls but no ceiling, for sleeping on summer nights.

So the top is going to be open, so you essentially will be on the roof?
Oh, yes. There are wonderful, fantastic decks all over the whole thing. There is also a long metal bridge suspended on cables from which much of the upper level of the house is accessed. The decor is severe, somewhere between Hoover Dam and Pirates of the Caribbean, with lots of exposed interior concrete and grand gloom. One enters from the very bottom of the house, via a dark, asymmetrically winding stair. There are no facilities for houseguests. I don't like houseguests.

How do your architects and builders look at what you're designing for them to create?
I certainly had some very imaginative architects in place, whose virtue was they understood the things like the mirror. What they didn't understand was that I also had to live in the house, so I was perpetually reminding them about practical things like closet space and the ability to live there in the house. Anyone who builds a house will tell you that it is a much larger task than a human being can imagine.

Are you planning a curio section of your home, with various artifacts you might have found through your career?
My major magic collecting area is books, and I have a huge library with the obligatory secret door, a pivoting bookshelf full of books, which you push aside to enter my office area.

I have a couple of real choice rarities. I was given an autographed photograph of Chung Ling Soo, which hangs very proudly in my house. Chung Ling Soo was a Scottish-

American magician who affected the appearance of an Asian, and who was the most famous person to have ever been killed by the bullet catch.

I have an unobtainably rare photograph of Houdini doing the needle-swallowing trick in the San Quentin prison yard, which I'm very pleased with. It's amazing to see Houdini looking about the size of an ant in the corner of this yard full of men in striped uniforms, and a striped American flag behind Houdini.

Eventually, I will certainly install the classic carnival electric chair. That's already under commission. It's the kind of thing in a carny where they say, "Miss Thunderbolt was struck by a bolt of lightning when she was three years old, and now she's resistant to electrical current. Here, hand her this fluorescent tube. See, she can light it from her fingertips. Now she can light a torch from her tongue." One of those will be installed so that I can electrocute visitors.

I will have planted an electromagnet underneath the floor somewhere in the house so that objects placed there can become light or heavy at my will. You can imagine the possible surprises that would be available through such mechanisms.

Even though I'm living in the desert, where everybody has a swimming pool in the backyard, I don't like the sun that much. I like to look at the sun from inside, so I have an indoor swim spa. It's a huge metal tub, and there's a propeller at one end that pushes the water at you. You swim into the current; it's like a treadmill, but for swimmers. I've used it for about a year now, and it's quite wonderful.

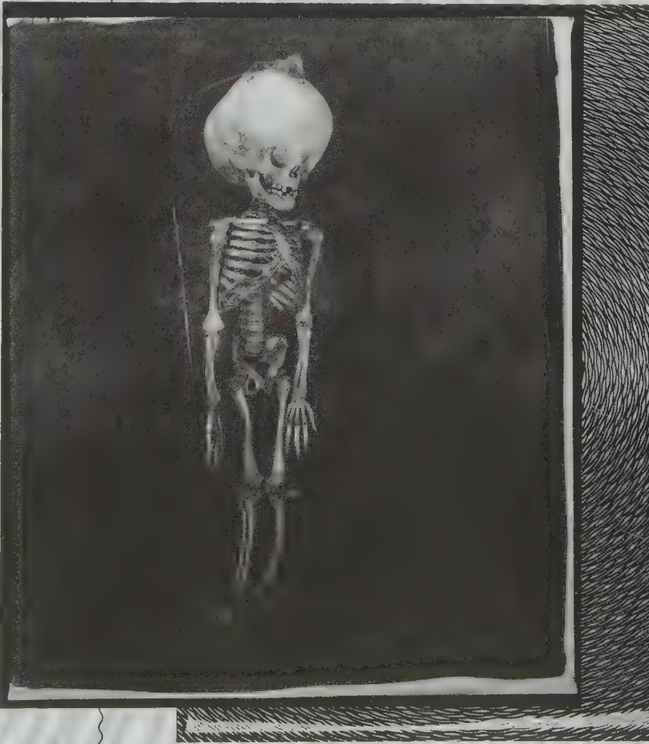
I have a Mütter Museum photograph that hangs in my house. It's one of the beautiful pictures that Allan Ludwig and Gwen Akin took of the hydrocephalic child's skeleton, a platinum print, which they nicknamed Onionhead. It's stunning. A great work of art.

How did you first find the Mütter Museum?

My mother. My mother knows my character pretty well. She is the person who used to greet the children at the door in a black shirt and black slacks and a skeleton mask. The kids would stumble down the long, dark hall that we had filled with rags and tennis balls, while my dog barked furiously at the far end, and my mom would let out this hairsplitting scream. My father would be sitting at the kitchen table by candlelight with a sheet draped over him and a hideous monster rubber hand to hand out the treats.

For my sixteenth birthday, my parents went to the local medical supply house, and gave me my own genuine human skull. That's a gift of love if ever there was one.

I was at home and my mother said, "You know I read an article about this museum that sounds like your kind of place." So one day my father and I went over and wandered around the Mütter for



Teller's Onionhead. Photo Gwen Akin

quite a while. My father took it for a certain amount of time and then it got to him. It gets to everybody, because it's very powerful. It draws you clearly to your own mortality. You can't look at the things that are in that museum without thinking about yourself.

My father had had enough of it after about forty-five minutes. But I went back in.

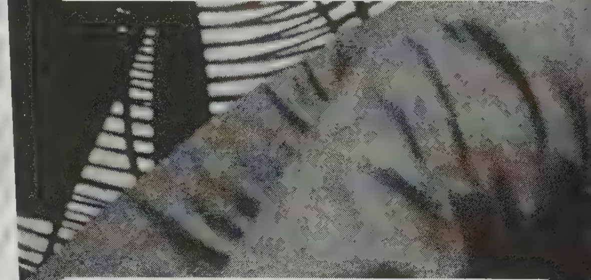
A friend of mine knew Gretchen Worden, the curator, and said: Be sure you talk to Gretchen. She's a marvelous human being and an interesting person. So we met and became great friends. I just did a story for the November Travel and Leisure magazine about the Mütter Museum. It's a pretty fair description of what the experience is like.

Oh, great! So you have a full article.
Yes. Travel and Leisure had asked me to write an article about my favorite place. They told me about someone who had written an article about his favorite Old New England clapboard cottage, where he used to spend summers as a child. I said, "I'd like to write about a museum full of human remains."

I bet you get a giggle looking through the exhibit with all the drawers filled with pins, needles and other objects people have swallowed.
I do. I actually wrote about that. Though what strikes me most about it is a thought, a serious thought: every single one of those pins and needles represents somebody's extremely painful near-death experience. Every single one of them.

A physician was able, because of his training and because of the nature of medicine, to set aside the pain and drama of each of those episodes and put down in a very clear, cold way exactly what went on. What the object was, how it ended it up where it was, how long it was where it was, how they removed it, and whether or not the person survived.

And because the physician was willing to not be passionate, but to be clear, he was able to acquire a repertoire of tools for saving people's lives. I know it's fashionable for people to say that medicine just makes people into statistics, and I say, "Yes, thank goodness." That's exactly what it should do. It's thanks to medicine's willingness to be impersonal that we've learned something about the human body over the last couple hundred years.



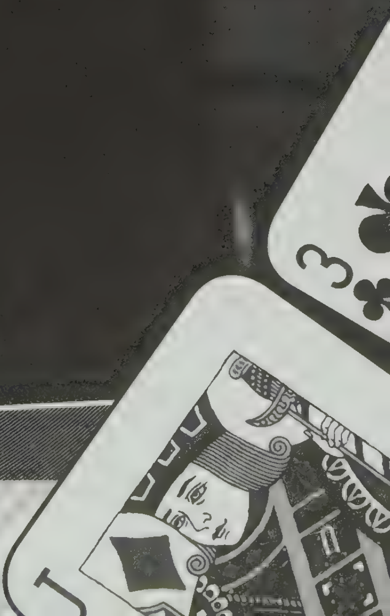
The article is a meditation on that sort of thing. There's the great Hyrtl skull collection, which is a huge feature of the museum, in which each of the skulls is described by a little card with three or four lines on it. Those three or four lines are things like, "So-and-so Taylor. Death by cyanide. Suicide because of an unhappy love affair."

That stuff just strikes to your bone, because there you are looking at the skull of somebody whose whole life is summed up in four lines about the size of a haiku. You can't help but say to yourself: "What's going to be on my card?"

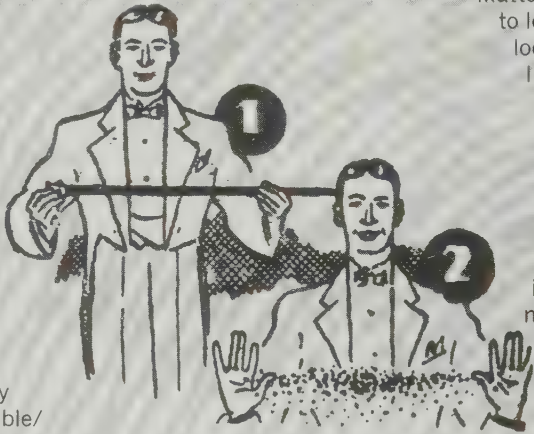
Were you able to take photographs of the museum to reprint them? Or is the article solely descriptive of the visit?
I didn't take photographs, but I believe Gretchen provided the photographs. The article was somewhat edited to go into Travel and Leisure, because they have a limited amount of space, but in How To Play In Traffic the full article appears with the photograph that I sort of designed. Which is a photograph of me staring at my little framed Onionhead, my Akin and Ludwig photograph of the hydrocephalic child. The reflection of my face comes right over his enlarged skull.

It's kind of nice. Because that's the way you look at it. The Mütter is just like a

Andy Warhol learns a bunny joke in *Penn & Teller's Invisible Thread.*



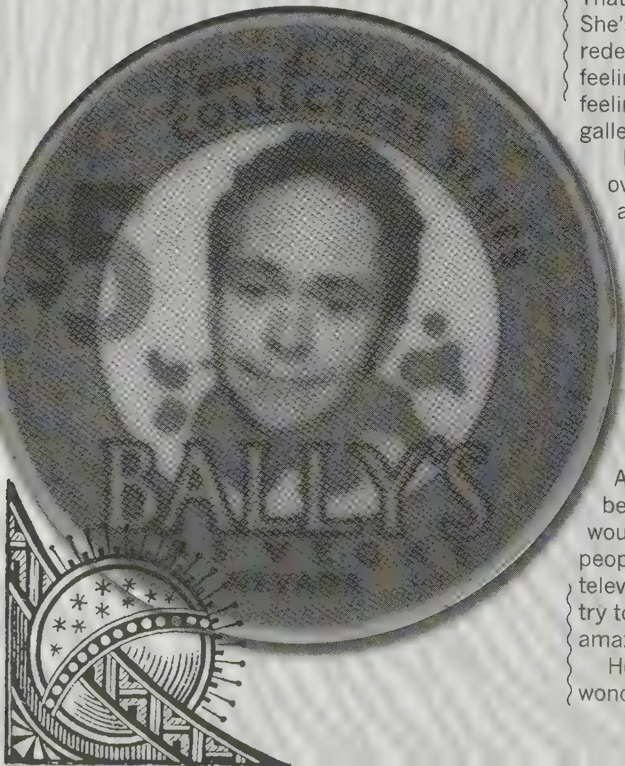
mirror that you hold up to yourself.



There was a time when they stopped making the calendar because a new management wanted to tone down that image. I'm not sure what they were afraid of.
They felt the underlying dignity of the medical side had been overshadowed by the drama of the horrible/beautiful qualities of the exhibits, and they feel they must hide them to keep their status.

I think it is a tremendous mistake, because you have to fall in love with something before you attend to it, before you learn from it. And it's the drama of the exhibits that makes you want to go to the Mütter. I didn't go to the Mütter because I wanted to learn about objects lodged in esophagi. I went there because there were scary skulls and dramatic things that caught my imagination. As a result of my visits, I became really interested in the medical stuff.

Exactly.
For them to not realize that that stage of romance has to precede the stage of education...

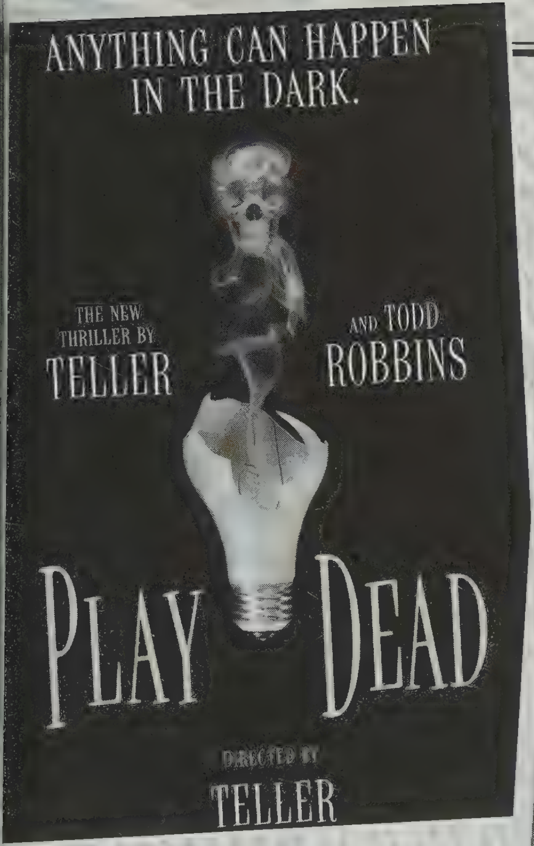


The artistry of what is there. The care, the craftsmanship of the work. The cabinets, the structure, the design of the museum itself. The two levels. Even the opening wood sign. It's all just gorgeous.
That's largely a result of Gretchen's work. She's the person who was involved in redesigning that place so that it has that feeling of being an art gallery. It has the feeling of being an antique and beautiful art gallery.

I do know that her interest is overwhelmingly in medical anthropology, and that really is her central interest, but the fact is that she's got a marvelous sensibility about it. She sees not only the beauty and dignity of it, but she has a sense of humor about it, which is terribly important.

Were you involved in getting Gretchen onto television?
No, she was on TV well before I met her. Again, it stuns me that the college should be so concerned with its dignity that they would take one of the best press relations people in the world, namely Gretchen, off of television venues, when the whole idea is to try to improve the college's image. It's just amazing.

Her Letterman appearances are just wonderful to watch, because she's calm,



she's professional, she's cool. And she out-cools Dave on every front. She scares the liver out of him by just showing him quaint little medical devices, and she's there being calm and rational and sane and educative. She's like a perfect teacher.

And Letterman is there going, "Oo, oo, my goodness! Oh, keep that away from me! No, no, I'm not going to touch that!" It's a delight to watch. How could anyone not see that as the best possible promotion?

On my last visit there were a couple of kids with heavy metal t-shirts, and I guess that's what they're afraid of. But, hey, if people come, isn't that a good thing? Who else is going to know about the College of Physicians of Philadelphia? We wouldn't know about it if it wasn't for the Mütter.

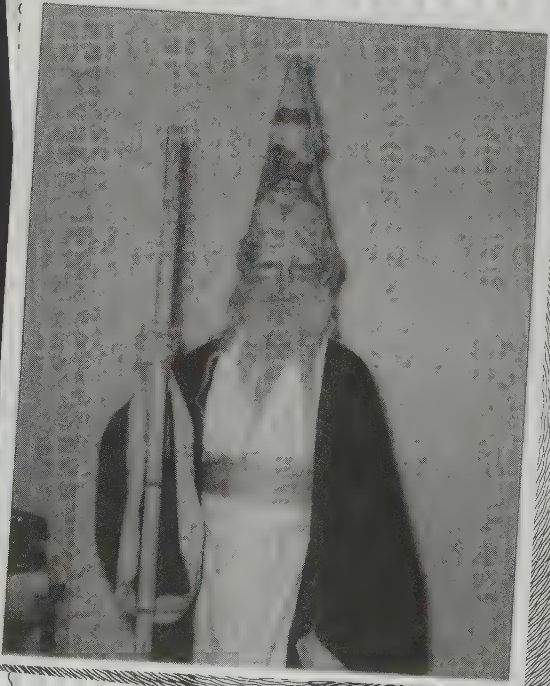
The educational value of it all is important, especially for people that would never bother to look into advances in medicine. It's like: Wow, look, medical devices. Look what was used. Look what people thought. This is the next step past bloodletting.

Right. All of those things are so powerful and so important, and you don't get to see them in other places. You don't get to see the things that doctors really used on human flesh. And it's really important to see that.

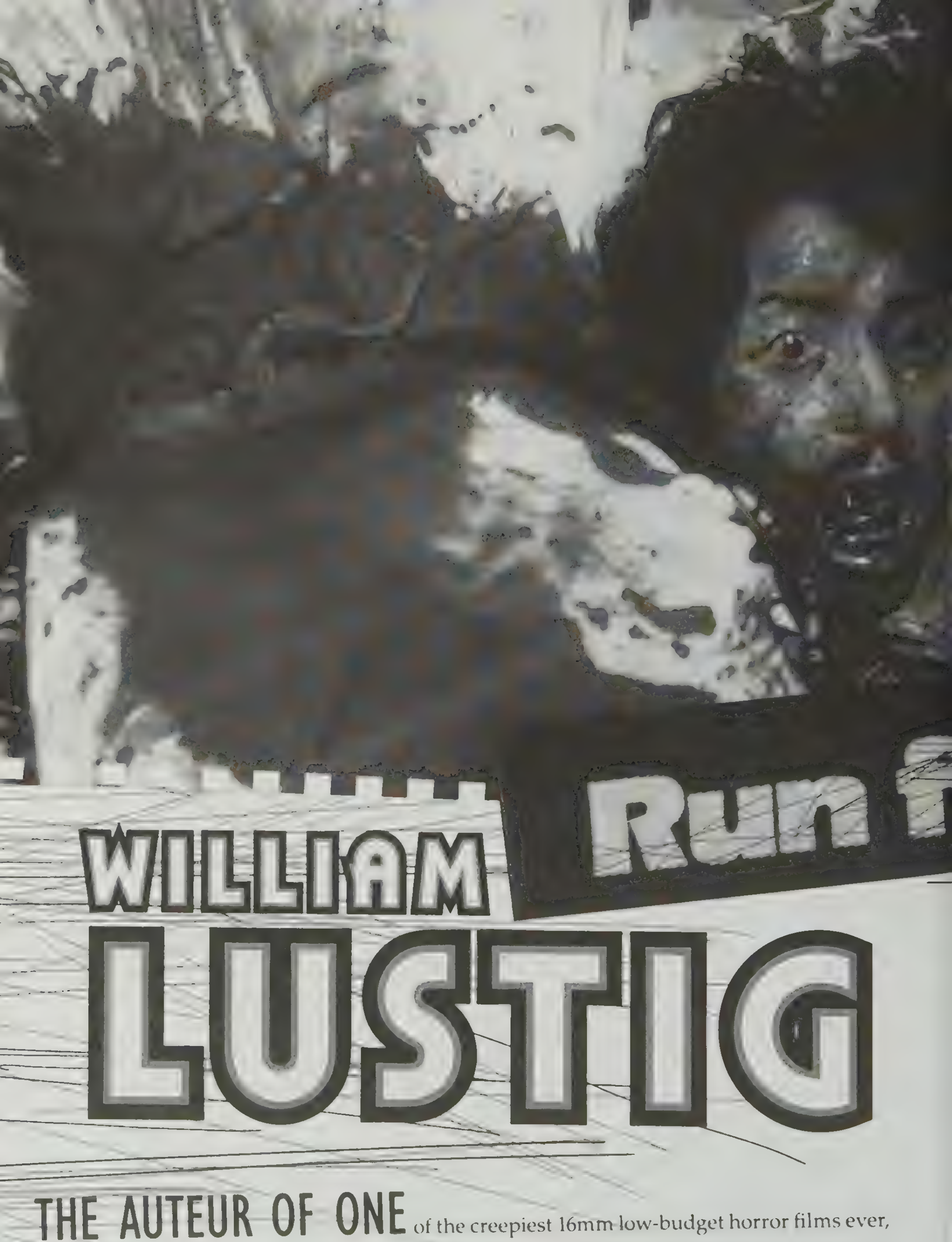
Because to the people of that period, it seemed like the most modern and wondrous stuff.

Nowadays we have other things that are modern and wondrous that will no doubt be seen as barbaric. I think probably in 100 years, surgery will be gone. And the idea that you would cut someone open in order to treat them will seem outrageous.

You don't think those thoughts until you go and see, really see the real thing.



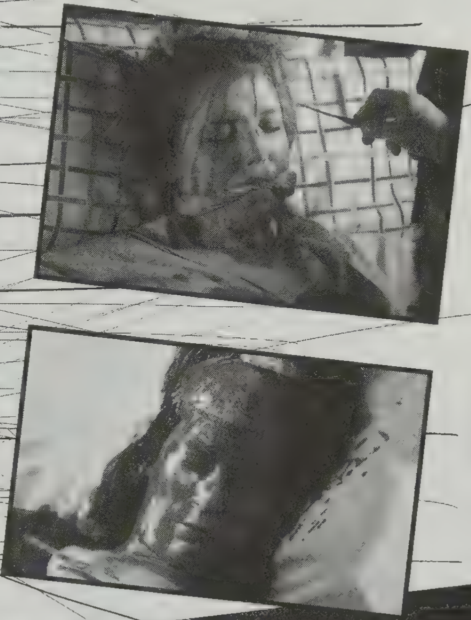
Promotional artwork for Teller's latest stage production, *Play Dead*, with Todd Robbins, and [right] Teller's Halloween disguise that fooled the neighbors. Courtesy Teller.



WILLIAM LUSTIG

THE AUTEUR OF ONE of the creepiest 16mm low-budget horror films ever, Bill Lustig changed the look and feel and impact of horror films by his strong and balanced acquisitions for fledgling DVD label Anchor Bay. Titles that at best were seen on fifth-

> "I feel very proud of what we accomplished."



m this man!

generation grainy bootlegs were made available in deluxe editions and sparkling transfers. Lustig's passion for Italian horror and crime films educated an entire generation of film fans and beyond, and heavily infused his own directorial output.

My first issue of Fangoria magazine, #7, included glorious color photos of one of Maniac's scalpings, and after paying for a ticket to an innocuous G-rated film at the long-gone semi-grindhouse Crossroads Cinema in Bellevue, Washington, the eyes of my brain were opened to Maniac's depravity and genius. Lustig's Maniac is a classic horror creation and his crime efforts from Vigilante to Hit Cop series is a classic horror creation and his crime efforts from Vigilante to Hit Cop series carry his brand. Bill and I spoke before the launch of his carefully selected Blue List carry his brand. Bill and I spoke before the launch of his carefully selected Blue Underground label, furthering his already massive efforts to broaden cinema shelves of the Americas. We all owe a massive thank you to the work of William Lustig.

Scenes from *Maniac.*

SHADE RUPE: Where did the script for Uncle Sam come from?
WILLIAM LUSTIG: The mind of Larry Cohen. Larry wrote the script. We did the Maniac Cop series together.

Was there anything in your intent that was political with taking on this script?
Actually, it was all in the script. Larry showed the story outline to me about three years ago. I liked the idea but was not enthusiastic enough to develop it further. Two years ago, I directed the ill-fated The Expert in Nashville where I witnessed how middle America celebrates the Fourth of July. I then 'got it'.

In New York and Los Angeles, where I've lived, it's just an extended weekend. For most of America, it's a time to revel in patriotism which involves guns, military uniforms, marches, etc. It is my belief that patriotism is often a mask for intolerant feelings toward others.

It's like that one line in the film where the mayor says, "We can't cancel this. People are waiting for this all year long."
Exactly. In the Midwest, this is a very important holiday. And it's something which is not taken lightly. It's as big as Christmas for them.

Do you think audiences in the Midwest would then be offended by Uncle Sam?
Some, but the audience for this picture is the young 'six-pack and a joint' crowd who rarely are offended by any picture with death and destruction.

It's a satire masked in a horror film. I think that the people that might be offended by it are older and less likely to go see this kind of movie.

It seems that if it was released in theaters that people might go because it's an election year, and we also had

Joe Spinell, William Lustig, and Caroline Munro enjoy some playtime during *Maniac.*

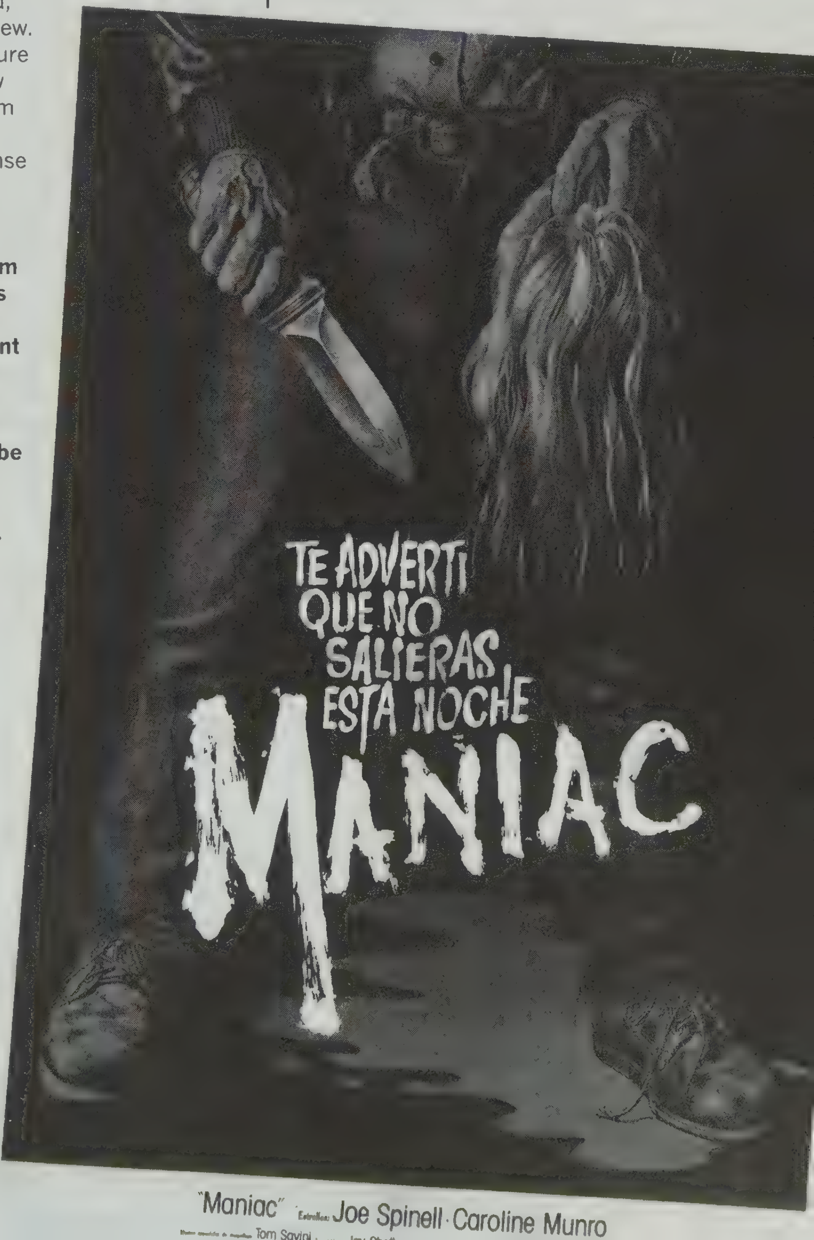
Independence Day. The average moviegoer might also get a kick out of the poster idea. I agree, that was the plan going into this project. All those things are possible, but I just think it's unlikely. Ultimately it will be viewed as a horror picture. I deliberately tried, through casting and performances and all that other stuff not to skew the picture to have a heavy-handed, one-sided political view.

However, the picture is an example of how the bullshit of the film business conspires against common sense and ultimately good business sense.

William Smith's poem read over the credits at the end could be seen as an indictment of going to another country and fighting but in the context of the film, it can also be seen as humorous. That poem was William Smith's idea. He phoned me as I was finishing the editing and read it to me. I felt that he captured the soul of the movie and that it would be an important beat to end the picture on. Bill Smith is the greatest!

I think the film has a very strong message, but the message isn't in the forefront; it's part of the characters and their points of view and the way they relate to each other. The best horror films have an underlying social message. However, it is important not to be so heavy-handed as to lose sight of the audience's expectations for what a horror movie should deliver.

It's like The Exorcist and The Omen, creating fear in new parents who had lived through the 60s, perhaps ingesting various


TE ADVERTI QUE NO SALIERAS ESTA NOCHE
MANIAC
"Maniac" Estrellas: Joe Spinell · Caroline Munro
Tom Savini

chemicals, and being afraid of their own children. Both films were able to take advantage of those fears. Those ideas are in the films, but the films don't have to tell you those ideas are there and they both deliver what you expect from a horror film.
Exactly.

When the soldiers are in Kuwait at the beginning of Uncle Sam, was that supposed to have been a couple of years later or a recent accident?
The 'accident' happened during Desert Storm, the discovery is recent. Sam is such a strong-willed little devil that a few years buried in the sands of Kuwait are not going to stop him from getting his revenge on America for having been shot down by 'friendly fire'.

It almost parallels Maniac Cop.
Of course it does. This is clearly an extension of what Larry and I had done with Maniac Cop.

Was William Smith ever a choice to play Sam?
No. He was considered for the Jed character. He was actually one of the top three choices for the role. The reason we chose Isaac Hayes is that he brought an indefinable quality to the role. He has such a warmth to him, he's so immediately likable that you instantly empathize with his character's guilt for his part in creating Sam.

Also, when I look at Isaac Hayes' face and his eyes, I see so much living. And that's what I wanted. I wanted a face that tells you this guy has seen it all, done it all. That's what I always get from looking at Isaac Hayes.

Too bad you couldn't have gotten a theme song from him.
Don't think I didn't try! I had him sing the National Anthem so I could cut a sequence. After he finished I was so happy that "I now own an Isaac Hayes song." He laughed, "No you don't." During breaks in shooting we sang the theme from Shaft together and talked about doing a sequel to the great Truck Turner. He was so much fun to work with.

While watching Uncle Sam I started thinking about Lucio Fulci's films and then at the end you dedicate the film to him. Were you thinking with an Italian mindset while making the film?
I'm always thinking of Italian films. Lucio Fulci was the greatest. The cemetery scene in Uncle Sam was inspired by the opening of City of the Living Dead, where the priest hangs himself in the cemetery. When I went looking for cemeteries, I had that kind of cemetery in mind. Fulci's death shocked us all.

That scene with the kid hanging from the flagpole is beautiful.
The impact of that angle came from the advice of the assistant cameraman on The Expert. On that picture, I was shooting this rooftop fight scene which had the hero hanging five or six floors above the ground. He suggested I use a 28mm anamorphic lens for the overhead shot which gives tremendous depth of field. It looked pretty damn cool, so I continued to use it.

Who was your cameraman on Uncle Sam? Had you ever worked with him before?
His name is Jim Leibowitz. He worked on Vigilante as an additional assistant

William Lustig moonlighting as a hotel manager in *Maniac*.

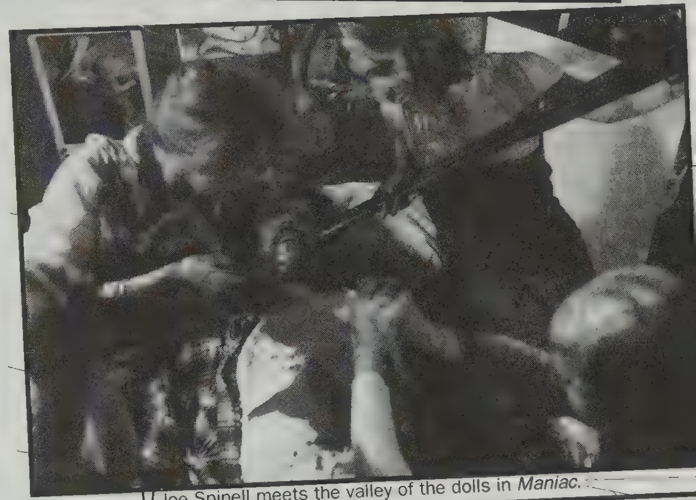
cameraman and on Maniac Cop 1 and 2 as an additional camera operator. He was camera operator then moved up to director of photography on the early Northern Exposure episodes. He's a very good cinematographer with a big future. He also shares my passion for good dim sum.

Have you approached any distributors with the film at all?
Uncle Sam is in Movie Hell. The foreign sales company Solomon International Pictures/Quadra Entertainment is effectively out of business. Broke. They did not do any promotion at all for the picture's premiere at Cannes. Consequently, twenty-seven people were at the Cannes screening in a 400-seat cinema where Maniac Cop 2 played to sellout crowds for two or three screenings several years earlier.

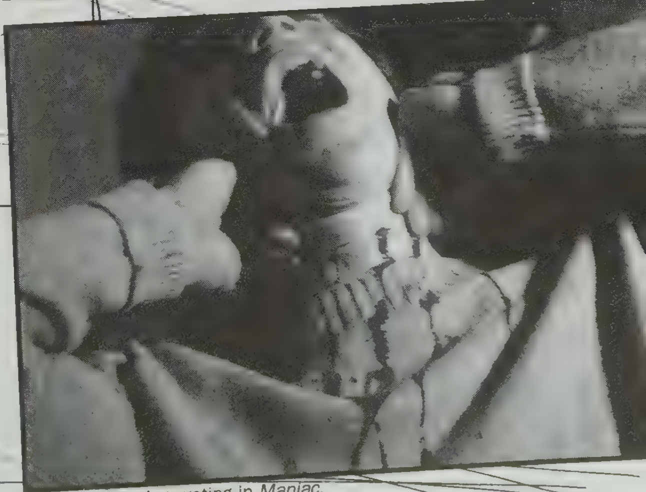
The movie is now in the hands of the investor's attorney whose only interest it seems is to milk money from his rich and naive client. It's all very depressing.

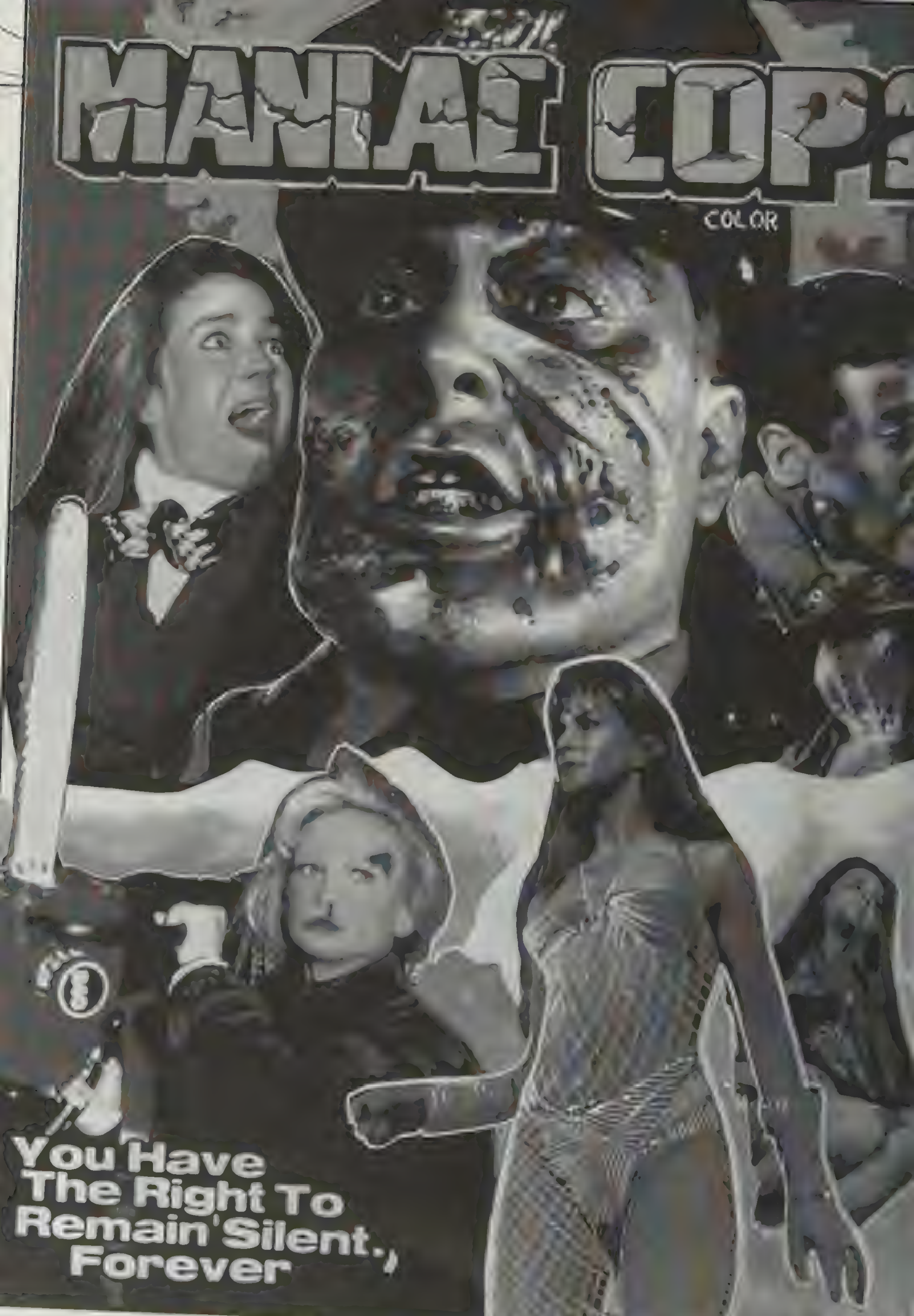
If the film gets released theatrically do you see any sort of problem getting it past the MPAA?
The MPAA has already given Uncle Sam its R-rating. I believe in showing them a picture during the final stages of post-production to avoid costly changes. I had to 'nip and tuck' a few scenes for them, no big deal.

It's surprising that the flagpole shots made it through.
Nothing surprises me with those idiots. For Vigilante, they made me trim the machine-gun slaying of the cops and the shotgun squib hit on the bad guy but left the graphic shotgun murder of a little boy totally intact.


Joe Spinell meets the valley of the dolls in *Maniac.*

Century's
Theatre
JOE SPINELL
WILLIAM LUSTIGS
MANIAC
CAROLINE MUNR


A garroting in *Maniac.*


MANIAC COP2
COLOR
You Have The Right To Remain Silent., Forever

Pakistani poster for *Maniac Cop 2.*

The flagpole impalement insert shots were directed by the editor Bob Murawski; he loves horror.

He photographed those shots?
Yeah. He's a major horror film fan. Bob tormented me during post-production about the lack of gore in the picture. To shut him up, I gave him the job of shooting the insert shots. He shot the insert of the pole actually going through the torso. Not the shot of the actor, but the insert of the pole going through the stomach.

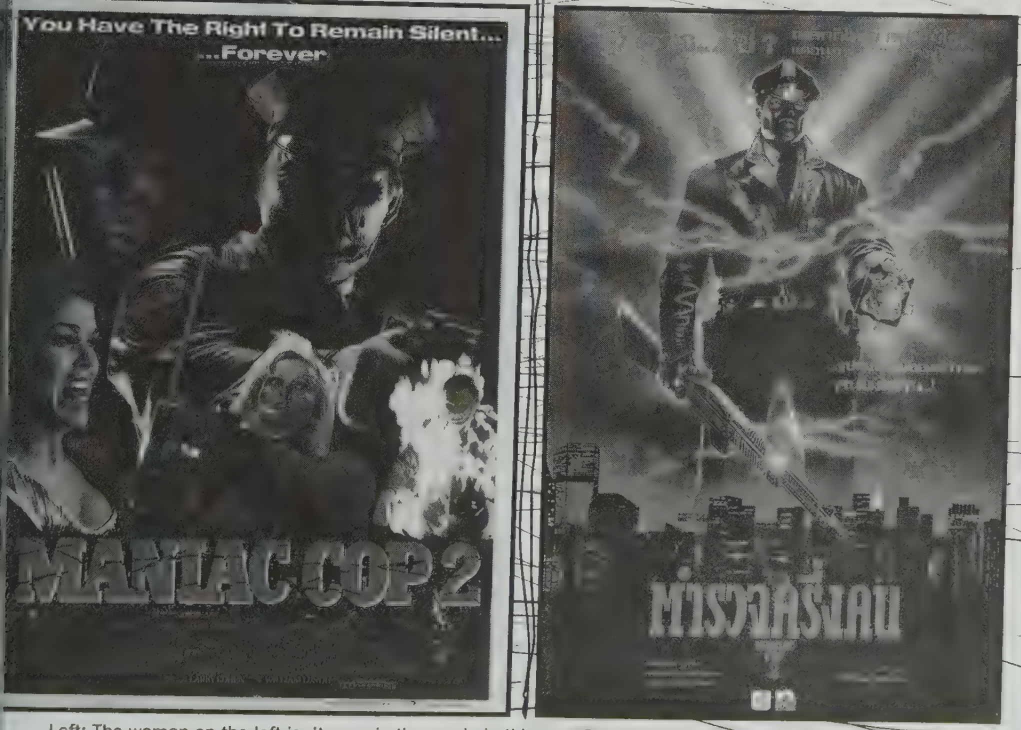
It cuts into the picture well.
Yeah, that's the idea. He figured it would punch up the movie. He did all those little inserts in the film. And with Bob being such a horror film fan, everything was excessively gory. He also did that insert shot of the boy's broken leg in the grave.

I said, "Bob! What the fuck is that?!" And he said, "Oh, it's a chunk of meat and his bone sticking out." I said, "It won't match the wide shot," and he said, "Trust me. It'll make everybody squirm." He's nuts about gore.

Why did you decide to take your name off of The Expert?
Because in the end it wasn't my picture. I did not direct the last week of shooting or edit the picture. It was the first film where I worked with a 'star' who was a condition of financing. The Expert was originally called Brute Force which was intended to be somewhat of a remake of the 1946 prison film with Burt Lancaster and Hume Cronyn.

I worked on Brute Force for about a year-and-a-half trying unsuccessfully to fully finance the project. An opportunity to close the financial gap came with Jeff Speakman attached. I seized the money to get the picture made and out of my life.

The script was written as a character piece, with action. The script needed to be entirely rewritten to suit an action star with limited acting ability. I was in a position where I had worked and prepped this movie for a year, scouting locations around the


You Have The Right To Remain Silent...
...Forever
MANIAC COP 2

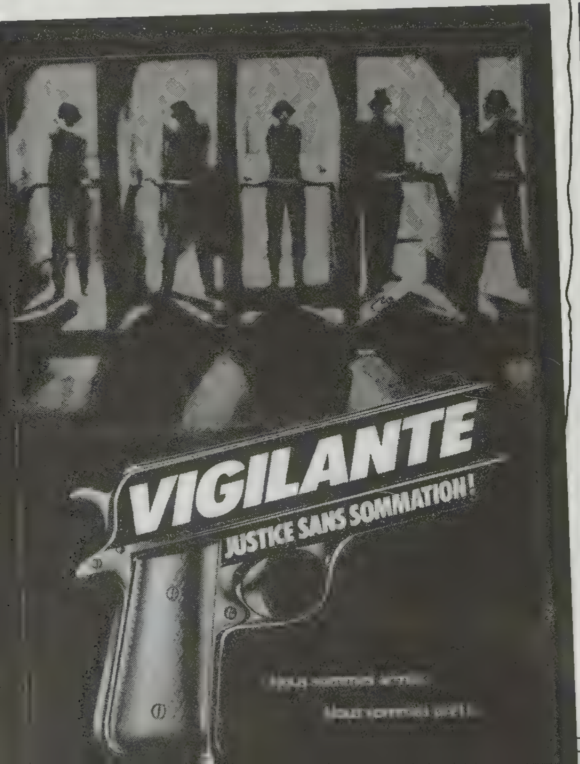
Left: The woman on the left isn't even in the movie in this zany Pakistani poster for *Maniac Cop 2*. Right: Thai poster for *Maniac Cop 2*.

country and really putting a lot of work into it, and all of a sudden I had to make it a vehicle for an action star. I had to force action set pieces throughout the script and cut dramatic moments. It was ludicrous.

From day one of shooting, my only goal was to get it over with. I did not get along at all with Speakman. He reminded me of that character played by Bill Pullman in Ruthless People. This was an experience that made me question my continuing in this business.

Did you have as many people crashing through windows in the script as in the final movie?
Those weren't in the original script. I was already committed to shooting the film in Nashville, so I just went down there and would try to find every opportunity to inject more action. If I saw windows, I would find ways of having characters crashing through windows.

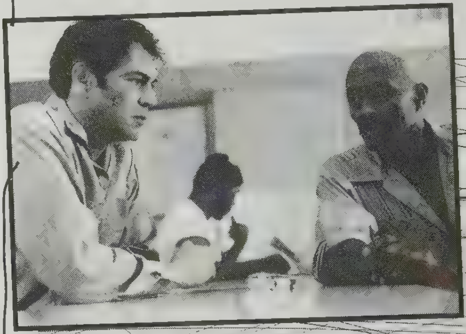
How much of the original movie that you had in mind ended up in the final version?
Practically none.

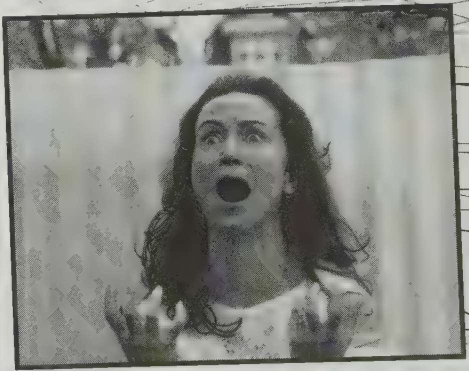


So your original character wasn't a martial arts hero?
Are you fucking kidding?!

That's how the movie starts, with a martial arts intro credit sequence.
That was shot later in Los Angeles as an afterthought. It's just so hokey.

The guy who played the killer was actually kind of fun to watch.
Yeah, he's a very good actor. He was terrific to work with. We got along great. I was very pleased with most of the cast. I had a good time with the people that I worked with. It just became increasingly impossible to deal with Jeff Speakman. I wasn't prepared to deal with somebody like that.





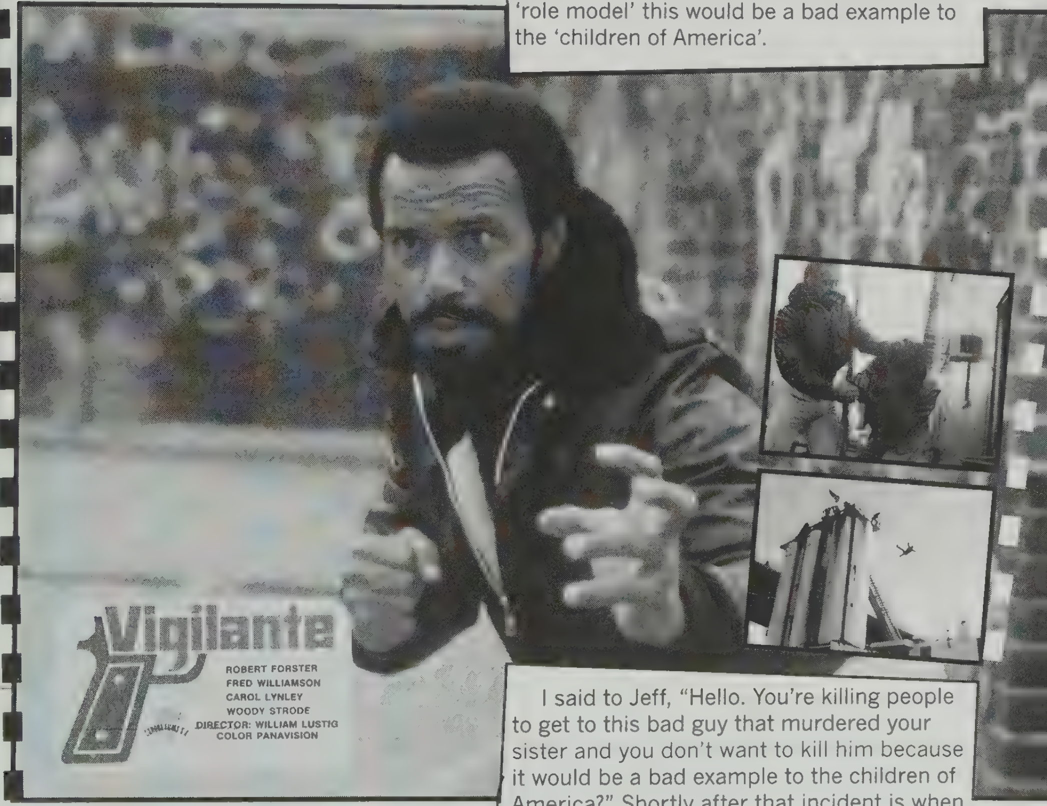
Even The Expert has its own message with the moral dilemma of the execution of killers.
To tell you the truth, I found the whole subject matter very distasteful. That was an actual death row. The electric chair scene was shot in an actual execution chamber.

Hanging around that whole world for as long as I did really started to get to me.

Prisons are inherently uncomfortable. They're musty and they smell. Even though there were no prisoners, the prison still had that human stench. That was another thing, it was just very unpleasant making the picture.

That fight scene in the loft between the killer and Speakman prior to them falling through the window; we had to get a company to come in and clean out all the birdshit. But obviously they can't clean out every bit of it so there were still remnants of old birdshit in there. Oh, man.

It was a combination of really just feeling that the picture was not something that I believed in and working with an actor in a difficult situation, all those things combined just made me say, "You know, I don't really want to be around this anymore."



How much of The Expert were you not involved in?

I shot most of the prison stuff. I did not shoot the murder of the sister, the news station, the girlfriend's house, the alley fight.

Did you do that final action scene on top of the roof?

Unfortunately, yes. That was when I got fed up with Speakman. I was shooting this dangerous, complex scene when all of a sudden he decides not to push the villain off the roof to his death. He reasoned that as a 'role model' this would be a bad example to the 'children of America'.

I said to Jeff, "Hello. You're killing people to get to this bad guy that murdered your sister and you don't want to kill him because it would be a bad example to the children of America?" Shortly after that incident is when I left.

So were the prison scenes shot on sets in Maniac Cop and Maniac Cop 2?

The helicopter establishing shot in Maniac Cop was the real Sing Sing prison. In fact, the warden warned me that if we flew closer than 500 feet he would order his guards to

Main image: Fred Williamson kickin' it ol' skool in *Vigilante*. Previous page from top: Woody Strode coaches Robert Forster in jail life, and the electric Rutanya Alda screams for her baby boy in *Vigilante*.

shoot us down. My eyes were fixed on the helicopter gauge during that shot.

In Maniac Cop 2, the exterior bus pull-up was Rahway State Prison in New Jersey. All the interiors for both pictures were shot in Los Angeles on sound stages or practical locations.

Before The Expert, your last film was Maniac Cop 3, and with that you took a shared credit with producer Joel Soisson.
When I started Maniac Cop 3, I had just experienced a career disappointment. I was set to direct True Romance and was replaced by another director. Maniac Cop 3 was an easy picture to put together but I was still reeling from that True Romance experience, and I just wasn't into making it. The producer Joel Soisson directed some scenes so I insisted that he receive a codirector credit.

Was the script already written for Maniac Cop 3?
The script was written by Larry but it wasn't his best. This began a process of endless rewrites. Larry quit. The three producers

Judd Nelson babysits in *Relentless.*

assigned to the picture by the financing company were insistent in changing the direction of the series to something more mainstream. They did not relate to Larry and mine's quirky off-beat sensibility which created the franchise in the first place.

It was announced at one point that you would be starting a Maniac Cop 4.
Maniac Cop 3 actually did quite well, despite my misgivings with the picture. The Maniac Cop series is extremely strong overseas. Larry and I want to reinvent the concept. We want to totally clean house and start fresh. It's the only way for me to get excited about doing a Maniac Cop 4.

But still retain Robert Z'Dar.
No. We will have totally new characters.

Is there a script available?
Larry wrote a treatment which I really like.

The difference between Maniac Cop and Maniac Cop 2 is so extreme. Maniac Cop 2 is just so over the top.
Maniac Cop was a sleeper hit throughout the world. The now-defunct Shapiro Glickenhaus Entertainment financed that picture at a cost of $1.2 milion. However, the company foolishly—again, internal politics and egos—passed on doing the sequel which left Larry and I free to pursue other companies. Medusa Pictures in the UK cofinanced the $4 million sequel with private investors.

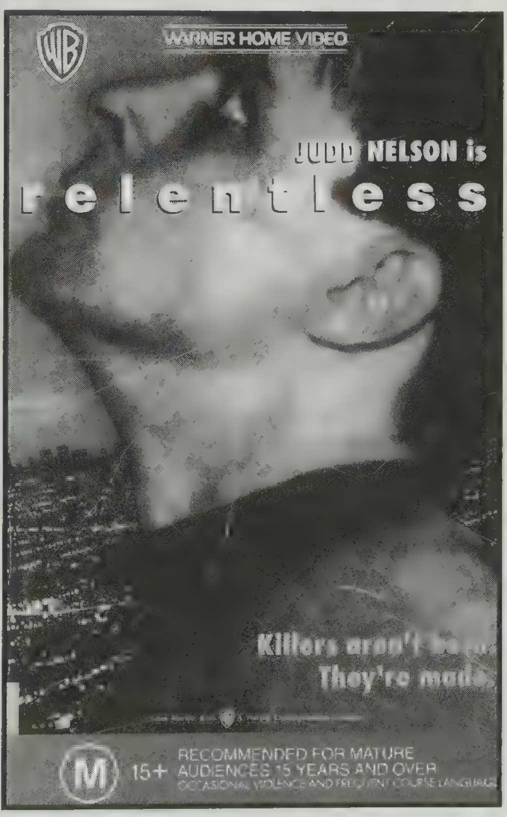
It was my goal to amplify what we did in the first picture. At that time, I was getting into Hong Kong action films and wanted Maniac Cop 2 to have that level of over-the-top action set pieces. I feel very proud of what we accomplished.

In my opinion, Maniac Cop 2 is my best picture. It's a real favorite of mine. Certainly it is my last picture which I produced without the detriment of bullshit politics. What I liked about the film from a production standpoint was that everyone came to play. Everyone came to do their best work. No politics, no bullshit. So often the politics is what derails these films. It almost inevitably does it. We just got down and made the movie.

I really felt this same camaraderie with the crew on Uncle Sam. Making Uncle Sam was very much a throwback to making the pictures of years ago. The crew was really into making the movie. We had a very good experience all the way down the line and I'm very happy with the way it turned out.

How was it working with the kid?
We had a difficult situation with having young kids working on the movie, because at some point they turn into a pumpkin, according to the law.

That happened when I worked on American Heart. Eddie Furlong could only be on set for a certain amount of time. And you have to have teachers come down.


WARNER HOME VIDEO
JUDD NELSON is
relentless
Killers aren't
They're made.
M
15+
RECOMMENDED FOR MATURE AUDIENCES 15 YEARS AND OVER
OCCASIONAL VIOLENCE AND FREQUENT COURSE LANGUAGE

Exactly. There are a lot of restrictions. A couple of times I asked the crew if they would push back their lunch in order to accommodate my getting the work done with the kid in the time that I had him. Because

I had the double problem that the kid couldn't work after midnight.

If the crew's lunch was at eleven, and I still hadn't finished the work with the kid, I asked the crew if they would please stay, and they agreed. We had just a very good experience all the way down the line. I was very pleased with the crew I had on that movie.

You didn't have Jay Chattaway as your composer on this film.
Unfortunately not. Jay was unavailable based on the original schedule—he was composing Star Trek—but became available when our schedule changed. By then the producer George Braunstein had hired a friend of his, Mark Governor, to compose the score against the objections of the editor and myself.

He was the worst and has really harmed the picture. I continue to be hopeful that I will be able to change the score and fix the terrible sound mix which was a consequence of this asshole's shit score.

What is the story behind your True Romance? How long had you been involved with it?
I was involved with it for about two years. Tarantino had been shopping the script around. I thought it was a great script, thought it would make a great movie, and I acquired it. This was before he made Reservoir Dogs. In fact, it was his intention to use the money from the True Romance script to finance Reservoir Dogs.

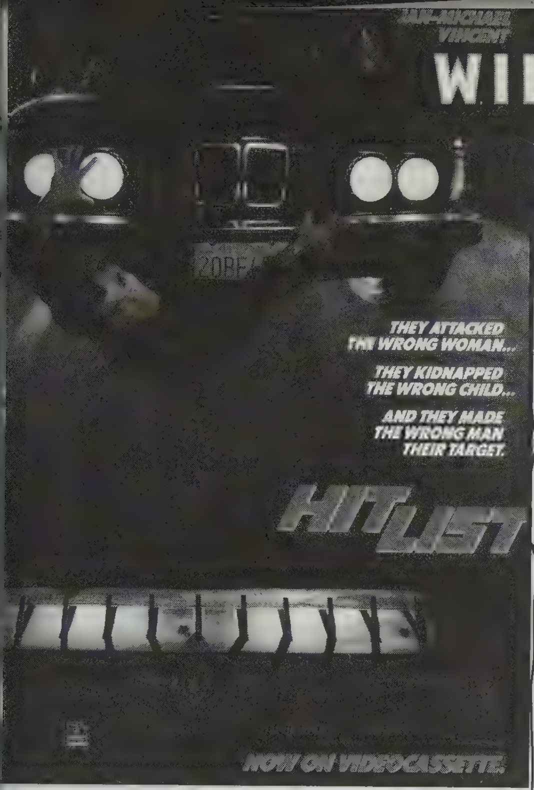
What pre-production had you done on the film?
I did script revisions with Quentin; another revision with Roger Avary. I scouted the Detroit locations. I met with over 160 actors and actresses. We were ready to go. The problem was that the producers were having trouble raising the financing because of the offbeat nature of the script.

What do you mean by the 'offbeat nature' of the script?
A Japanese distributor reads the first six pages and it's a scene where three black guys are arguing about how black women have been ruined by white men eating

RATED
X X X
CLAUDIA
PROCESSION
1 VIOLATI
2 PASSIO
3 BIG SEX FEATURES
TAD

PROVOCATIVE. DIFFERENT
VIOLATION OF CLAUDIA
AND CANDY LIPS

Bill Lustig's first feature, The Violation of


JAN-MICHAEL VINCENT
THEY ATTACKED THE WRONG WOMAN...
THEY KIDNAPPED THE WRONG CHILD...
AND THEY MADE THE WRONG MAN THEIR TARGET.
HIT LIST
NOW ON VIDEOCASSETTE

their pussies and then a white guy in the room blows them away with a shotgun. The potential distributor has a perplexed look that tells you that they don't 'get it'.

When Tony Scott read the script and said he wanted to direct the picture it became a whole 'nother ballgame.

How was he able to take the movie away from you?
They basically pay you off. By this time the script belonged to the financiers and it was their decision. If someone is going to start financing a movie, they're going to want to own the property.

Who were you originally casting, then, in the Christian Slater role?
I remember, at the time, I met with Matt Dillon. I met with so many good actors. Every actor that came in, without exception, was great. I had a good casting person on that show, guy by the name of Joe D'Agosta. Really did a great job.

So you didn't have Gary Oldman playing that long-haired white rasta?
I had an entirely different take on that. In fact, my take on that was more Michael Madsen. Without dreadlocks, without any of that stuff. It would have been an entirely different film in many ways, if I had made the picture, than what ultimately it turned out to be.

I thought that Tony Scott brought a kind of an MTVish, cartoonish feel to the picture. I had much more of a Don Siegel film or a Nicholas Ray picture in mind. So it was an entirely different approach to the same subject matter.

I was really happy with the hotel room scene with James Gandolfini, the character actor who was also in Terminal Velocity with Nastassja Kinski. He was like: "Turn around for me, turn around for me"—bam!
The truth is, I had considerably toned down the violence of that scene in the draft that I had prepared to shoot.

Tony Scott reinstated the entire scene as Quentin had written it. So if you like the scene with the extensiveness that was in the film, that might not have been in the version I would have made of the picture.

It's weird how Christopher Walken's character just shows up at the trailer, and then he's just gone from the movie.
That was another difference. Scenes with him were intercut with the hitmen's pursuit of Clarence. The character then flies out to Los Angeles and is killed by Clarence in the final shootout in the hotel. So Clarence gets the opportunity to kill the person who he doesn't know, but we know, killed his father.

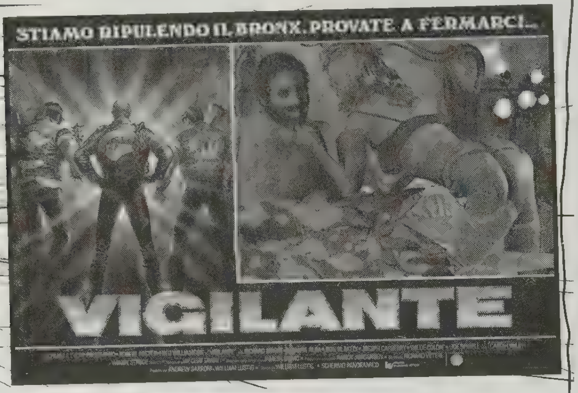
There were other changes like that, but I think they did that to accommodate Christopher Walken's schedule.

Did you have any interest in continuing the Relentless series yourself?
I didn't really feel there was a series to continue. CineTel offered me the opportunity of directing the sequel which I turned down after reading the script. They have now produced three sequels.

You're quite the progenitor.
I think I am the most sequelized director around. I just returned from Europe where I finally got a copy of the unauthorized sequel to Vigilante directed by Enzo G. Castellari. I

am more proud of Vigilante 2 then any of the Relentless sequels. It's a great movie.

Do your movies do pretty well in other countries?
The further I go from home the more I am appreciated. My movies do great in Europe. I've heard that I have a cult following in Japan. Maniac is now regarded as a classic there.


STIAMO RIPULENDO IL BRONX. PROVATE A FERMARCI...
VIGILANTE

How did you and Abel Ferarra meet?
We first met when he was looking for financing to finish Driller Killer. I happened to know the guy who came in with the finishing money so I got to see the original 16mm screening of the movie, and that's how we met. And then I became a big fan of Ms. 45. He was in Cannes selling Ms. 45 the same time I was selling Maniac.

Our paths crossed all the time. King of New York and Maniac Cop 2 were opening the same day throughout France and Abel and I were in Paris. He was there to promote King of New York and I was there to promote Maniac Cop 2. They had a special critics' screening of King of New York and Abel saw me before the screening. We both acknowledged seeing each other's posters around town, and the fact that we were opening the same day, and we wished each other luck.

Abel got up in front of the crowd, and you know Abel, he holds the mic like a blues singer, and he had on these dark glasses at ten in the morning, and he was saying how happy he was with the movie. And at the end he mumbled, "So tell your friends to see King of New York and not Maniac Cop 2."

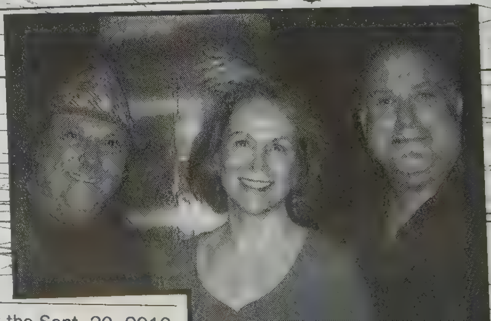
You're also friends with Sam Raimi.
My producer's rep on Maniac and Vigilante repped Evil Dead. Sam had told me that he went to this rep because of his handling of Maniac. Sam's a great guy, he's a really very good friend. I wish we had more chances to get together these days but he's got the TV shows and he's also very devoted to his new family.

What other projects do you have in the works?
I've got a script by Max Allan Collins I'd like to do called Spree. It's a crime thriller and I really like the script a lot. I'm trying to set that up with a distributor to get the financing. I've also been involved with acquiring film libraries and have been toying around with distribution.

There are two early porn films of yours, directed under the pseudonym 'Billy Bagg': The Violation of Claudia with Sharon Mitchell, and Hot Honey with Robin Byrd. I guess there's no chance of seeing rereleases of these two films.
I don't own the rights to them. I sold the pictures in desperation during Vigilante to make cast and crew payroll.

I learned about distribution through The Violation of Claudia. I was unsuccessful in raising money for a horror film, so when I started getting my first checks from Violation of Claudia, I made Hot Honey. Which is a piece of shit; it's horrible. It was shot in two-and-a-half days. It's a terrible movie.

However, if it hadn't been for Hot Honey, I would have not had the money to start Maniac. It was the profits from Hot Honey that we were able to use as seed money for Maniac. Hot Honey is directly responsible for Maniac having been made. ◆



Writer Richard Vetere, star Rutanya Alda, and Bill Lustig at the Sept. 20, 2010

HERMANN NITSCH

"That will be at the mortician's discretion."

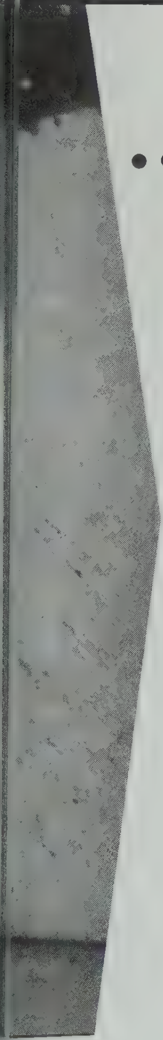
SHADE RUPE: Where were you born?
HERMANN NITSCH: In Vienna. There are twenty-one districts in Vienna, all on the River Danube. The Blue Danube, the Donau.

Did you grow up in any sort of an artistic community?
Nothing like that at all. My parents were middle-class people. My father was an engineer, and my mother worked as a secretary for Siemens. I'm not coming out of that atmosphere. I had nothing to do with that.

What were your early pursuits before you began construction of the theater?
Early pursuits... I was a bad pupil at school. Most bad in school. From the beginning, I was a painter. I had a talent in this way. And so with great luck, they gave me materials in the school for the possibility of studying advertising art. And in this school I was only interested in real free art. I was not interested in advertising art. My teacher really liked me very much, and protected me a lot. I studied five years in this school.

Hermann Nitsch at work. Archi

HERMANN NITSCH



THE FIRST VIEWING of a HERMANN NITSCH action isn't just seeing something, it's an experience. The blood seems so carefully placed as it runs down flesh, the positioning of the corpse so delicate, the straining of the human wrapped in a carcass so natural. The granddaddy of Viennese Aktionism, Hermann Nitsch is also one of the warmest, cuddliest Austrian teddy bears you'll ever come across.

Written about extensively in European art journals with a few scant articles in the U.S., Hermann Nitsch reached his artistic zenith with the full realization of his Six-Day-Play in 1998, six full days of wining, dining, and bloodsplashing. Mr. Nitsch and I met twice for this interview, once during a wintertime visit to Anthology Film Archives complete with a piano concert, and again at another New York art gallery visit.

When I was finished, it was not necessary to go to another art school, because there were only very, very conservative teachers, and I didn't need them. I had my own 'meaning.' I would say it was much better for me.

How did you happen to wander across Prinzendorf grounds as a young man?
That's a long story. On my mother's side, we had relations in Prinzendorf. During the war they took care of us. They sent us food and wine and fruits of the garden, because in the big city we had nothing to eat.

We went to Prinzendorf only to take some food back to the city. The first time I saw Prinzendorf I liked it very, very much, because it was an undestroyed country landscape. Prinzendorf was like in the Thirty Years' War. There was a development of thought there that I liked very much.

And then I was very involved in the Impressionists. The landscape of Prinzendorf is very similar to the landscapes which were painted by the Impressionists. The yellow wheat fields. I fell in love with this landscape.

And for the second part of the story, I had an aunt who took care of me because I had no father. He was killed during the war. And every year, my mother and I would visit her.

I remember a time when we visited this old aunt. At this time, we went around, and there was a way from the little house of my aunt to the castle. I saw the castle and I got a very, very deep feeling of connection to Nature, a very great contact to Nature. I think you would say it was a kind of mystic feeling. And at this moment, I had the feeling that when I am old, the government will give me this castle, that I can be up there with my theater, and that I can realize something there.

I had many problems with my work, and most of it put me in prison three times, and the idea to get this castle was impossible. Then they kicked me right out of Austria for my work.

They kicked you out of Austria?
Yeah. I then went to America.

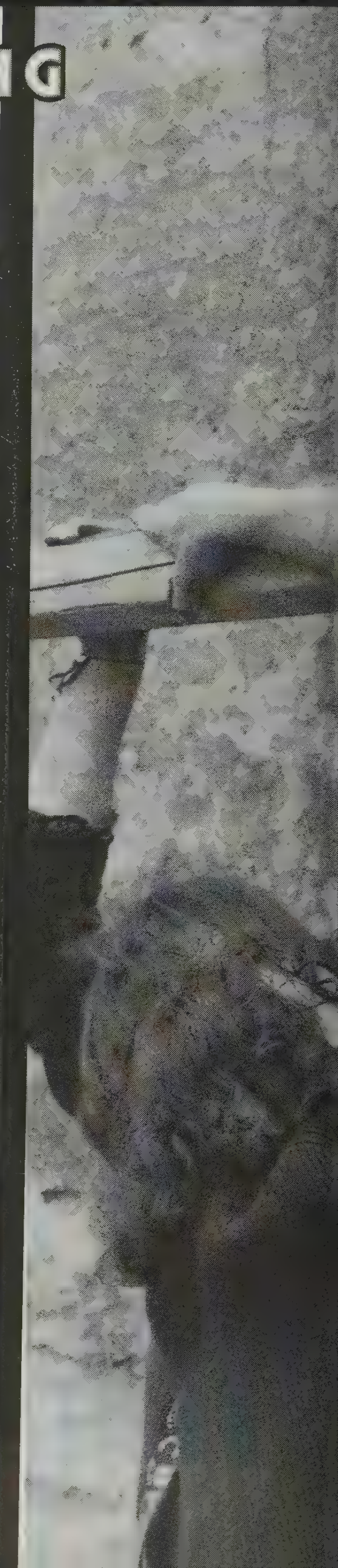
How old were you when that happened?
It was 68. I was with Jonas Mekas and had two performances in the old Cinémathèque on Wooster Street. I had great success.

I always went back to Prinzendorf into the wine cellars. Because it was possible to drink wonderful wine. And I always visited my relations, and they were coming with all their friends and we always said, "Let's make it a keller [cellar] party."

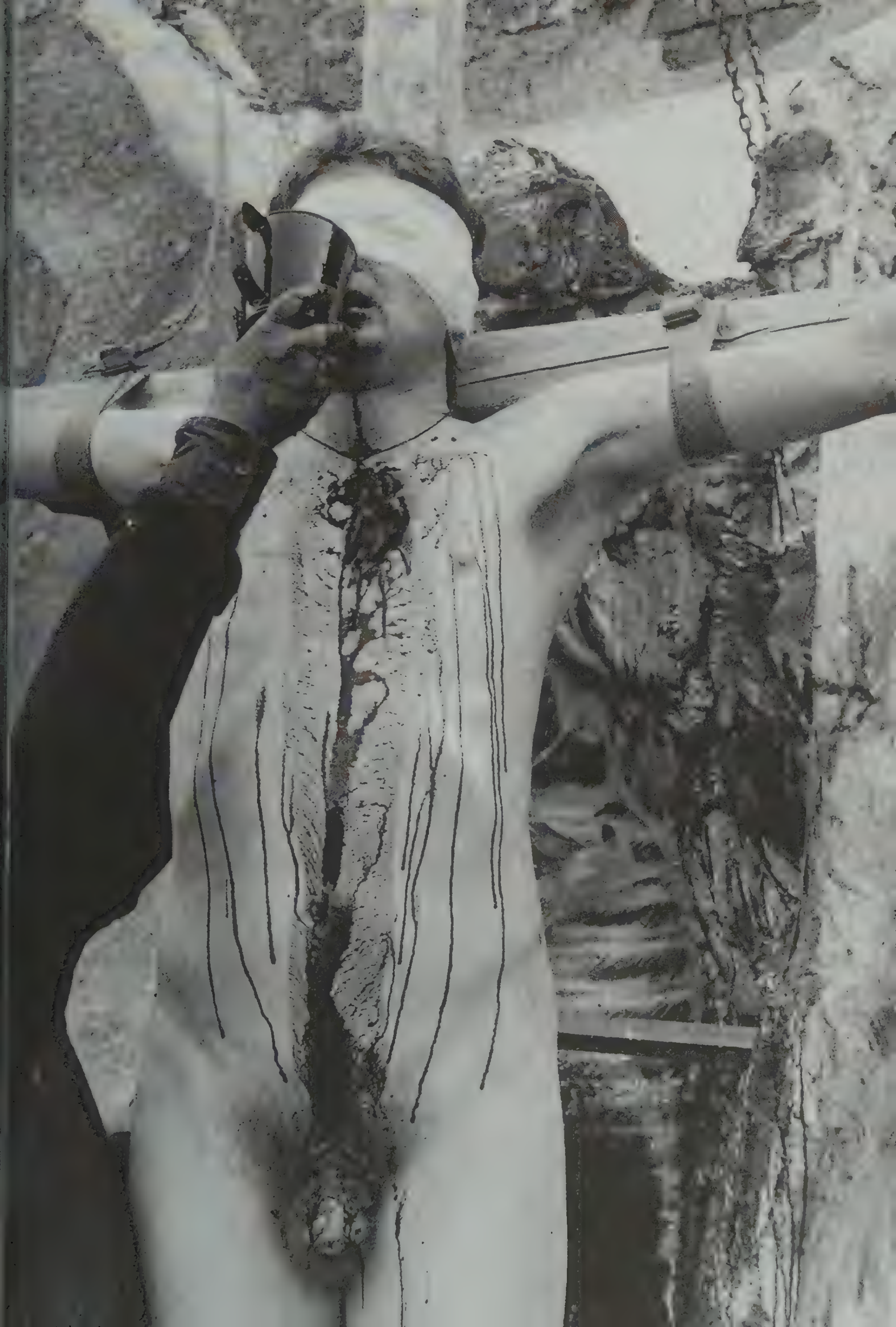
Was Prinzendorf open to the public then? It wasn't a private residence?
No, the castle was closed. It was not possible for me to go into the castle. But I visited my relations. I had two aunts at the head of this whole family. And always when you're in Prinzendorf, it's just fabulous. Let's say I was around thirty years old. It was always wonderful to go into these wine cellars. I like wine, and I like to be drunk.

So you could go into the wine cellar.
Into the wine cellars of the poor people. And at this time I met a woman named Beate who I married. She was German. And she got a little inheritance. And we wanted to buy a house in Germany. But it was so expensive that it was not possible. She knew I enjoyed Prinzendorf and she asked if there's a possibility to buy a little house in Prinzendorf.

She said, "We'll buy the castle. Nobody's interested in this castle, and they'll sell it very cheap. Maybe the castle belongs to the priest." And it was a Catholic priest who owned it.



50th Aktion, 1975. B. Nitsch and M. Paolin.



They wanted to give it away because the castle was at the center of a big farm. And they were not interested to care for the castle, and they gave it away. We had only to pay for the grounds, not for the building.

So I got this castle. And now it's my theater, and I'm doing my performances there. I like to do it there, because there I have everything that I need. A wonderful landscape, and the landscape is very deeply connected to my work.

With the photo exhibitions in America always I show photos from it and say: This is my theater. And there is absolutely no possibility here that I can get any kind of trouble.

Earlier you were describing wandering past the castle, and you felt something. How old were you when you first felt something about Prinzendorf?
I saw the castle for the first time when I was maybe eighteen, nineteen years old.

What was it that you felt? Was it an opening up of your mind? Was it a physical feeling? Was it an interior feeling in your heart?
Not only the castle opened up my mind. The whole landscape. It was like a revelation. I understand the world before I was very involved in Schopenhauer and in Eastern philosophy.

Later I became influenced by Nietzsche, and could say yes to knowledge and to the whole of creation. That was my well-kept feeling, that has helped me to become, as it were, against this world. To be in this feeling. And still now, I'll say absolutely yes to creation, and to being, and to life.

How did you become introduced to the priest and the castle?
We wrote some letters that we were interested to buy it. And then we got there in 70, 71. We were able to purchase the property for 700,000 shillings. It was really very, very cheap.

Did you have to do much fixing up? Did everything work, the plumbing?
At the beginning, it happened that the room was okay, and that the windows were okay. And we kept it in its original state for a while. And later, when I earned more money, then we restored it, really. Now it's really pretty, and it's a real historic property. We don't work against it. It's original. We're fixing it up along its original design.

How many people live in the castle now?
It's difficult to say at the moment. We really don't know. But during the week, several people are there. We try to bring people who are helping. So sometimes on Sunday, but only sometimes, we're both alone. But during the week, there are I would say fifteen people there at one time. We have an office. The office takes care of all the business things.

What was the number of the first Aktion at the castle?
I think the first performance at the castle was in 73 but I do not remember the number. But it was only a feast. I call it a feast when it's simple, not the coming together of people

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Photos from the Six-Day-Play. Archiv Cibulka-Frey.

from all those lands and the members of my society and the friends and whatever.

That was a numbered Aktion?
It was a numbered Aktion. The first was in 73, the next was in 74. And the first real Aktion, it was one day and one night, it was in 75.

Let me see, Destruction and Art was number twenty. What was the first Aktion?
The first Aktion was in 62.

That was the Blood Organ?
No, it was a little bit later. The Blood Organ was only an exhibition.

So June 4, 1962?
No, it was later. It was in, I think, in October.

For the Manifesto, in the translation, it says "On June 4th, I shall..." So it's speaking in a future tense.
Yeah. There was no performance for this. No live performance. I put the sheep on the wall, but it was not for the public.

So the first Aktion was not a public Aktion.
I only know that I did the first numbered live performance in 1962.

And that was with other people?
Yeah. That was an Aktion. Before it was only conception.

How old were you for the first Aktion?
Twenty-four, because I was born in 1938, and then the first performance, my second birth, was in 62. I used only my own body. I was on the wall, like crucified, and a colleague of mine, Otto Mühl, he poured blood on my head. For this Aktion he was my assistant.

Did you know, even at the first Aktion, that Prinzendorf was the place that you really needed to be? Was that possibility in your mind?
My subconscious had this view.

You were working with Otto Mühl, and you were also friends with Günter Brüs at this time, and Rudolf Schwarzkogler. You were working with similar art brut and you each explored your own identity in your actions.
I was always interested in realizing my theater project. And I was the first one who did, really, performing, let's say performing arts, in Vienna. And my friends all were coming later. Mühl was later, Brüs was later, and Schwarzkogler was later.

They all did great art, because everybody changed. There were no painters or sculptors anymore. They worked in a new kind of gesamtkunstwerk. They did all live performances. Let's say a real happening. Gesamtkunstwerk is always live happenings.

You can feel them with all your senses. With your eyes, with your nose, with your mouth, with your ears, and with your hands when you get Aktion.

Had you experienced any artwork yourself at this point that you felt came anywhere near to what you wanted to do with the OM Theater?
At first it was absolutely no. I would say 58, 59 and in the 60s, I wrote traditional theater. I was influenced by Petrarch, the German Expressionists and by the French Symbolists a little bit.

Also actors had to play their role, and I wrote for lords and nobles. And then came the moment when I was not interested in that alone and I had to describe situations where I have to use my sense.

I think why not let the audience directly feel their senses in the theater? And then I started bringing to the audience a little bit of food to taste and smell. Then they had to experience a very happening sense, the slaughter, the orgy. People had to touch meat. It was a reach for them that we poured blood on the stage and petroleum and benzene.

At the end of the 60s, I saw an exhibition with artists masturbating with prophylactics as their performance. They called it, I think, Xavier's Sense Trances.

Matthieu and all these guys, they're doing the same. It's the simplest performance to pour color or blood on the wall.

And so I would say I got a great influence from abstract expressionists, especially from the American way.

5th Aktion, 1964. Photo Franziska Kramel.

Where were you acquiring this blood? Just at the butcher shop?
It's the easiest thing. I find it at the butcher shop. It's very cheap, and not too messy.

And it didn't matter what animal it was from.
No, I did not have the possibility to choose. If it was a sheep's blood, it was a sheep's blood. If it was a cow's blood, it was a cow's blood. These animals we eat in Europe. The same what you eat here.

So you used blood in your very first performance, when you were on the wall?
No. That was color. Just color.

What was the first performance where you used blood?
I think it was my second performance. It was the first public performance. It was open for the audience. I used blood for the first time then.

What was happening in your mind with your performance that you felt you needed to use blood?
It was very open. I had only a concept. I didn't realize it. And then I saw it really at the end, and was very, very happy. And I always had the feeling that I had done it the right way.

And what was the first performance where you used an animal carcass?
It was in 63. It was the same performance I spoke before.

Why did you feel you needed to have an actual animal carcass for this performance, or for where your theater was heading?
When I went through the markets, I always saw dead animals, and I saw intestines, and I saw brains. And I saw in this a very, very interesting thing. All the audience have to use their senses. Very, very intensely. And when I use this material in my theater the audience's senses must be awoken.

When was the first performance where you used a live animal?
A live animal, it was here in New Jersey, Radcliffe College in 1970. They had a farm, and they gave me a sheep. "We have a sheep and we're going to slaughter it anyway." And so they reviewed it the first time, the professional slaughtering in my performance.

And did you feel at that time, is this the direction that you wanted to be heading, where you would actually have life be extinguished as part of the Aktion?
Normally, more than ninety per cent from all the animals I use, I buy already slaughtered, from the slaughterhouse. Only at Prinzendorf I showed slaughtering. It was there also I used only animals which were to be slaughtered anyway. And I changed the killing of animals from the slaughterhouse to my farmhouse.

I had not killed the animal. The society was already killing the animal anyway.

Is the animal slaughtered in the same way on your property as it is in a slaughterhouse?
It's the same way. Even, in parentheses, more humane, if you want it that way. And it's basically done by a certified slaughterer on his property. And it's very important also

This page: 8th Aktion, 1965. Next page: 3rd Aktion.
Photos Franziska Kramel

that we actually slaughter it and, in the end, eat it.

I show only a process which is going on anyway. And, really, there is no humane slaughter. It's such nonsense to say something is humane. If that is humane, then humane is very, very bad.

Is a bull killed with a bullet?
They're killed with a bolt gun.

There are live animals that are part of the Aktions, also.
Yeah, but they are only actors.

They stay alive.
They stay alive. They have a good life.

Is the killing of the bull part of the performance itself?
Yeah. This summer, we do the performance without a killing, the animals are already slaughtered from the slaughterhouse. Because the last time, I had so many problems with animal actors that I have enough—I don't like the slaughtering. It's always a sad part of my work.

It is very important that I wanted the people to see all they're slaughtering, that they see intestines and the process of killing.

In some years, we will again show the slaughtering in my house. But now this time I want to stop, because I have had enough from these stupid animal protectors. I am also an animal protector. I like animals very, very much. I have owned many, many animals, and take care of them.

As pets?
Yeah.

What sort of animals do you have as pets?
We had one bull, a black bull. One goat. I think really sixteen fowl that we had in there. A peacock. And a parrot. We have geese, not at the moment, but we have had them. We have ducks, we have chickens, we have all sorts of animals.

Do you have like a small farm on the property?
It is a little farm. But it's not commercial. We don't sell anything. It is for us only. And we have two dogs and six cats.

And they live in the castle, the dogs and the cats?
Three cats live in the castle. Two dogs live in the castle, and three cats are half-wild cats. They live free in the house. They don't attach to us.

So the actual killing, is that part of the Orgies Mysteries Theater? Is that part of the play, the actual killing of an animal? Or is that incidental?
It's a part of the play, because I want to show with my work everything: death, life, resurrection, birth. I'm a dramatist and they always reckon with death, and want to show death. And so it's a very, very important part in my work.

Do you feel that with this upcoming performance, the 120th Aktion, you will be able to perform your play without killing an animal? Will you still be able to realize your theater?
Sure, sure. If somebody is asking why I won't do it, he gets mad. Our society is full of lies. They kill animals, but they don't stand in for it. I kill animals, I use them for my theater, and we eat the animals as part of the performance.

What's also interesting with people who will eat meat or whatever, if you kill a cow or you kill a sheep or you kill a lamb, nobody cares. But if you start talking about killing a dog or killing a cat, they get very upset.
Yeah, oh yeah. Because they're our friends. And we sell a dog for food in this way. Don't sell a cat for food. It's cultural, though, because in China they eat all that stuff.

You're spilling a lot of blood on your own property, there's cow blood all over the ground. How do you clean this up?
It's not so easy. We have people that take care of this. We have to pay them, and it's not so easy. But anyway, we gave up the killing so there's less to clean up.

You spent almost forty years working to bring the Six-Day-Play to life. You would have a two-day version, a three-day version. You had worked so long and finally, for the 100th Aktion, you were able to realize a full Six-Day-Play. Now that the Six-Day-Play has been realized, is that going to happen again?
No, no, there's only one version of the Six-Day-Play. I'm working always on the score.

It's the ideal score. And when I will do the next Six-Day-Play, I think it will be better, really closer to the ideal realization. The first version I gave, this made me very happy. This was very important.

What were some of the difficulties in bringing the Six-Day-Play to life, once it began? You've spoken of the animal activists as being so awful.
The main difficulty is to get the money, to have the money. I have the most problems, sponsoring problems, with my work. And after I had the play, I earn money when I sell pictures and relics and all these things.

Are you calling the 120th Aktion happening later this year the Two-Day Play, or a piece of the Six-Day-Play?
No, I call it the Two-Day Play, and the Aktion has a number.

And will it be a variation, then? Is the Six-Day-Play, Hermann Nitsch's work, constantly evolving?
Always variations, because there are pacing elements. I use them always in my performances. But I'm able to say every performance is different. Basic elements are always there, and I use them in some value or variations.

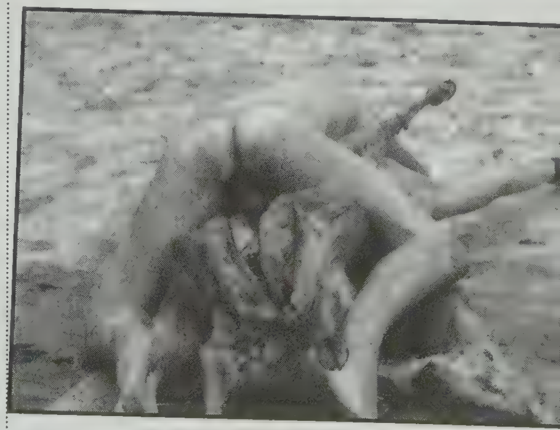
Since your theater is such an interactive event, it's more than just seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing, touching. There's also something happening inside the spectator.
To use our senses without our consciousness is not possible. And so you are correct, in a sense it's much more than the use of our senses. But it is important to say that, to use our senses is not against this spirit. Because to use our senses is a problem of our consciousness. Without consciousness, you cannot use the senses.

When you began creating the OM Theater, from what I've read it sounds like you wanted to not only create a gesamtkunstwerk, to create an experience of total surrounding, but to also create some sort of change inside the viewer or the participant or even yourself.

Do you feel that you've changed or altered from creating these performances and being a part of these performances? Do you experience something yourself by pouring blood in someone's mouth or putting cow brains on someone's genitals?
I want to say I'm trying to show our own nature. And also I try to find my own nature. I will say the origin of my theater can help to find it, for me and other people.

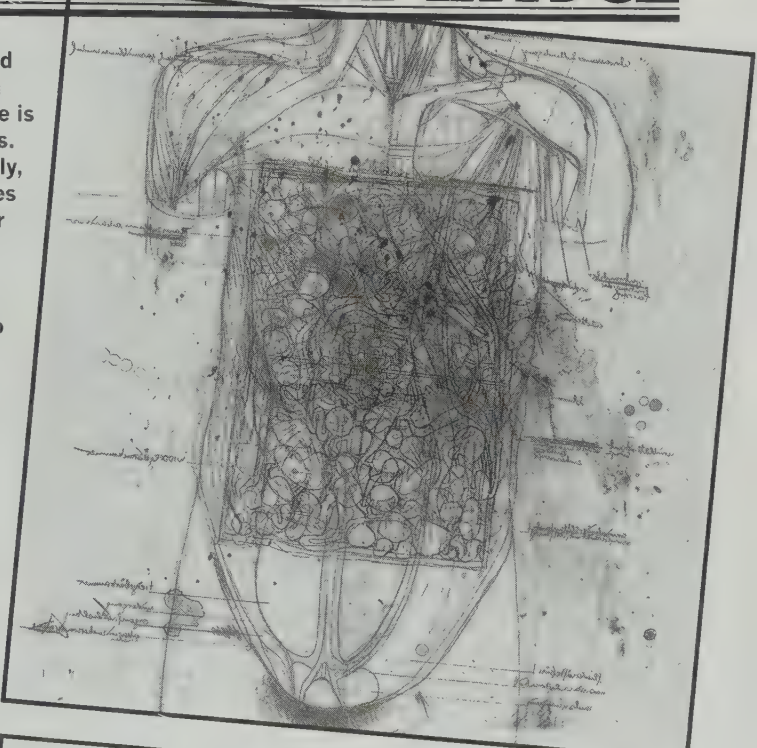
Are your scores solely made for the performances themselves, or are you also creating music to be performed away from an Aktion? I once attended an organ performance by yourself with two additional players. Was that a wholly separate event than the Aktions?
The real happening has to use our senses, all our senses. And so, if something is happening, you hear a sound, and you can also find the sound which makes the performance stronger. And also you can do a performance which makes the sound strong.

For me, my music basically has roots in the scream, in the minds, what happens in very early infancy. When you cry, you don't use your language anymore. It is these early feelings that brings out your cry.



I would say that's the roots of my music. And now my music becomes, let's say, more, there's more examination in it. Anyway, I always go back to the roots of the scream. Screaming, the scream we scream. The scream of being alive.

Photos Archiv Cibulka.



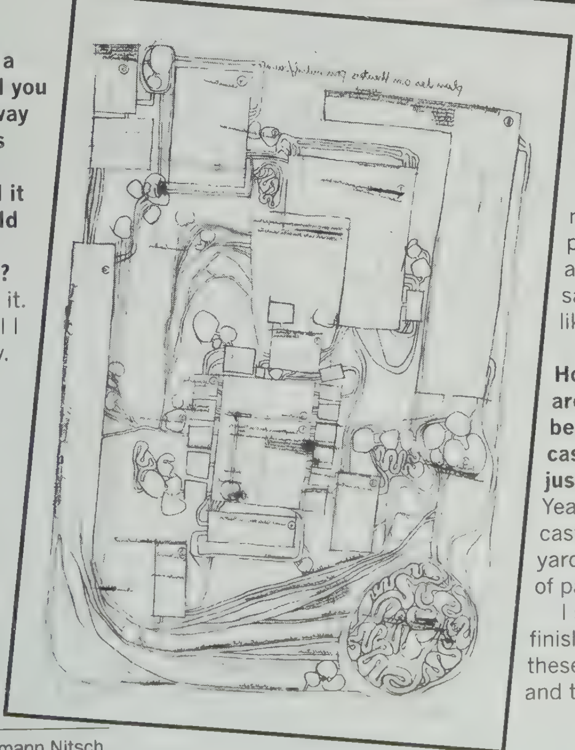
There's an artist in England who is using actual human cadavers in his artwork. He is able to find human corpses. He's been in the news lately, because some of the bodies he's acquired were murder victims, and people were upset that they aren't merely people who have passed on, but people who were killed, and then he's using their corpses. Have you gotten any closer to using a human cadaver, or is that something you're still pursuing?
I have always been very interested in doing that. I'm not against that: when a doctor can do that with a dead body, why can't an artist? I was very close to getting, from the university in Padua, some dead people. But it didn't work out.

How would you use a human body? Would you use it in the same way that you use a bull's body? Would it be strapped up? Would it be opened up? Would the guts be draped over a living person?
No. I cannot explain it. We have to wait until I actually have a body.

In the book The Architecture of the OM Theater, we see these drawings that you've done, these organ-like passageways, intestines as rooms. Is there a basement at Prinzendorf? Is there an underground to the castle?
I have in Prinzendorf subterranean rooms. I think for me it will never be possible to build all this. I would say this is more like concept art.

How many rooms are there? Are they beneath the whole castle, or are they just storage rooms?
Yeah, under the castle, under the yard. There are a lot of passageways.

I still haven't finished finding all these passageways and these rooms.



Original sketches by Hermann Nitsch.
Courtesy Hermann Nitsch.

I will use them, but I don't think it's really possible to realize this architecture project. It costs too much money.

What do you see for yourself when you pass away? How do you see your own body treated after your own death?
That will be at the mortician's discretion.

You don't think about being buried or cremated, or giving your body to science, or giving your body to art?
No. I don't think about this so much.

So you wouldn't see your body being opened up and used somehow?
Yeah, but I think I'm not such a beautiful thing.

How did Beate die? How did she pass?
From a car accident. Near Ulm. A long time ago. It was 77.

When did you meet Rita?
After one of the three-day performances in 84. Maybe I met her in 85.

So you met Rita after the 80th Aktion?
Yeah.

What is her participation in the Aktions?
She manages the whole organization.

What were some of the problems with the animal activists? What were some of the things that they were doing that was making your performance difficult?

There were not many, only seven people, but they made noise and demonstrations. And they destroyed my music, and it was not funny. Especially the newspapers, they followed them.

Can you hear them on the score, on the recording?
Yeah.

You can hear them making noise?
They did not give it up.

You participated with David Bowie on an Outsider Art panel in 1996.
He was interested in my work, and he used some photographs of my work for his Outside CD.

You were a judge in his Outside Art competition.
He invited me to go to Paris to choose the winners of this art competition.

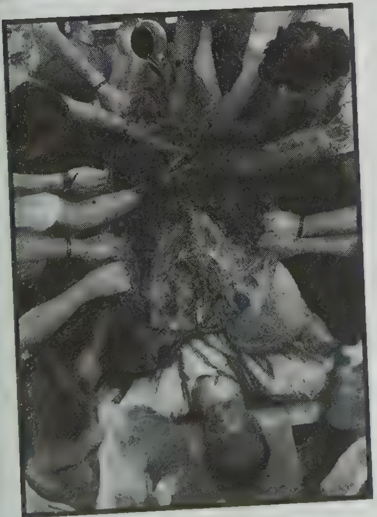
There was one piece chosen called Destruction of Man.
Yeah. Bowie visited me and he liked my work, and he invited me to Paris to be on a jury for his 'Outside' International Art Competition. He did a show, featuring the work of young artists. Bowie and I had the same choice for the submitted artwork and we gave the first prize to a young artist from the Philippines for his work, Destruction of Man. They exhibited the eleven winners at Le Monde de l'Art gallery in Paris.

Has he ever attended one of your Aktions?
No.

How about Yoko Ono?
She saw one in London, a very good one.

But not one at Prinzendorf itself?
Prinzendorf she never visited.

So for people who are interested in attending one of your Aktions, where should they go? Should they go to your website?
Yes, the website.



Previous and this page: Images from the Six-Day-Play. Archiv Cibulka-Frey

What training does someone have to do to participate in one of your Aktions?
One week, a little bit more than one week to work with us. But if it's a bigger performance, then they need more time.

Are they tied up as part of the rehearsal? Do they have blood poured on their mouths as part of the rehearsal, or does that all happen live at the Aktion?
I would say it's at least live, I think.

So until the Aktion, they haven't experienced blood being poured on their mouths yet? So that's brand-new for them.
Yeah, yeah. But they must not—

Drink, swallow?
They can't do that.

Do you ever have any concerns these days, because of problems like mad-cow disease and other problems going on with livestock? Is that ever an issue, or is that not a problem?
Basically the people who sign up on the website obviously know what's going to happen to them. They basically also assume that all of the animals there, or blood they get, is from safe sources.

As far as doing scenery for plays and operas, I know you've done at least one, The Herodiade, with Placido Domingo. What sort of designs did you do for that?
Huge walls of red dripping paint engulfing the entire stage. There was no real blood for Placido.

You also create artwork outside of your own Aktions.
My Aktion paintings, yeah? Look here [points in a book], red blood.

Top: Archiv Cibulka-Frey, Bottom:

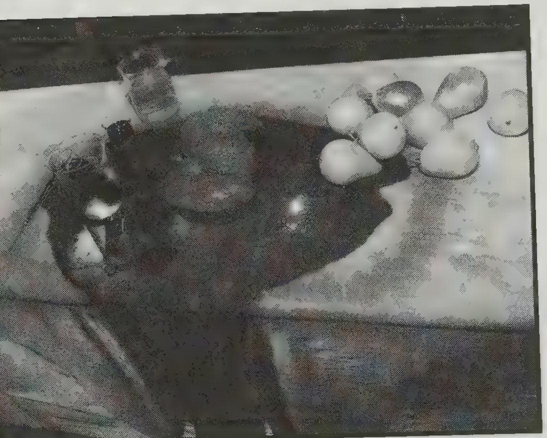
HERMANN NITSCH

Photo Franziska Kramel

Do you have a collection of other people's artwork in your home also?
Not so interested. We have a couple of pieces.

Do you feel some of the motifs you've used so far, like the crucifixion, is that going to remain as part of your Aktion all the way through?
All the way through. It's a very, very important structure.

And what is so important about the crucifixion, that it must remain in your work, forever?



I would say the tragedy. The tragedy is that somebody tried to do the best, and that they killed him. Like in the Greek tragedy. That's always the hero's fate, they kill him. And then the next station is the resurrection.

So Prinzendorf is your home. That's where you're going to remain and perform?
Yeah, yeah.

Could you see yourself actually being buried at Prinzendorf, your body melting into the environment itself?
Yeah, yeah. I don't know at the moment. It's interesting to think about.

Is everyone invited to an Aktion? Is it open to anybody who could come?
Yeah. They have to pay for the society. They must become a member.

How many members do you have right now?
At least a thousand.

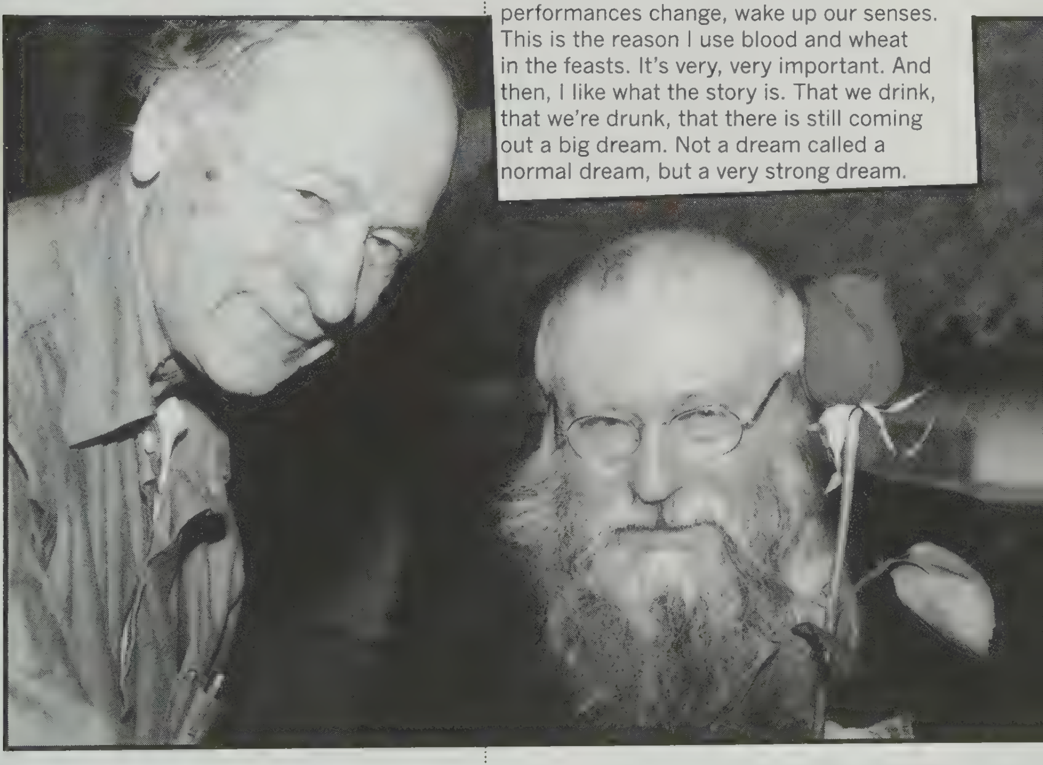
Do you find that your work today is much more of a realization of what you were working towards in the 50s? Are you finding that you're at where you wanted to be?
It's like a tree, when you plant a tree. I planted it, in the early 60s, I planted a tree. And the tree is growing up and growing up. The tree gets flowers and gets fruit. It's going on and going on.

So even back then you weren't envisioning, you weren't locking yourself in to this sort of thing? You weren't saying, "this is where I want to get"?
I had to think of the structure. But I was not able to do that in the 50s or early 60s. There was a long development, step by step by step. And also everything is growing up with me, you understand? Like this, I had the idea and everything was fixed. And now I realize that, no, only the idea has grown up.

In history, you have Schopenhauer. He wrote his main work, The World as Will and Representation, when he went to Weimar when he was very young. Then he continued his work. Also Wagner. He had the idea for The Ring when he was very young, and he performed it when he was sixty-four. He had all these ideas for Parsifal when he was very

Top: 'Mürzzuschlag.' Photo Matthias Herrmann and Franz young. And he developed everything over the years.

It sounds like you're absolutely aware of every piece that's going on. Like you're taking care of each piece yourself. You're walking in, and you're making sure that the musicians are playing what you want.



Jonas Mekas and Hermann Nitsch, NYC, 1999. Photo Shade Rupe.

I'm not always there. During the night, and other times I have to come back. Also to get a haircut.

Do you find that you are getting where you want through your performances? Are you getting to these states, this total state of happening of the senses?
I reach that often. I reach something, and I try to reach it, but there is a next time.

You seem to have a great love of life.
It's also necessary to see the tragedy of life.

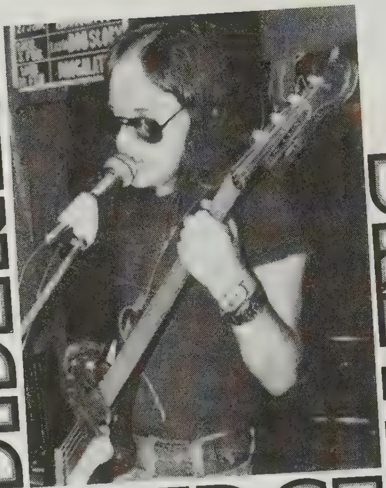
We can see what you do with a large performance to try to have a different state, to make life be that much more intense and that much more interesting. What are some simple pleasures in your life? The mundane parts of existence, the waking up. What other things in life can you use, or do you use in order to find these same states? Or can you do it in other ways?
I always use all our senses. And the performances change, wake up our senses. This is the reason I use blood and wheat in the feasts. It's very, very important. And then, I like what the story is. That we drink, that we're drunk, that there is still coming out a big dream. Not a dream called a normal dream, but a very strong dream.

That would be your consciousness, and your senses.

So even when you're not doing a performance, are you trying to have a feast every night?
I try. My idea of that is so the night becomes the day. The day becomes the night.

Do people ever come for just part of it and leave, or does everybody come for the full performance?
It's enough that the people can come and go. At the Six-Day-Play they slept in hotel rooms. This time we will sleep under the stars.

GENESIS BREYER P-ORRIDGE



> *"Not only is it redundan*
> *it is the path to*
> *destruction."*

IF YOU'RE INTO INDUSTRIAL MUSIC OR ACID HOUSE

and almost anything in-between, you've felt the influence of Genesis Breyer P-Orridge in your life. Genesis, along with pals Peter Sleazy Christopherson, Chris Carter, and Cosey Fanni Tutti, formed the ensemble known as Throbbing Gristle, injecting a pop spotlight on the underground. Gen and Sleazy continued their activities after TG's end with Psychic TV, and well after Sleazy left to form Coil, Genesis revved up the techno for some acid house rave.

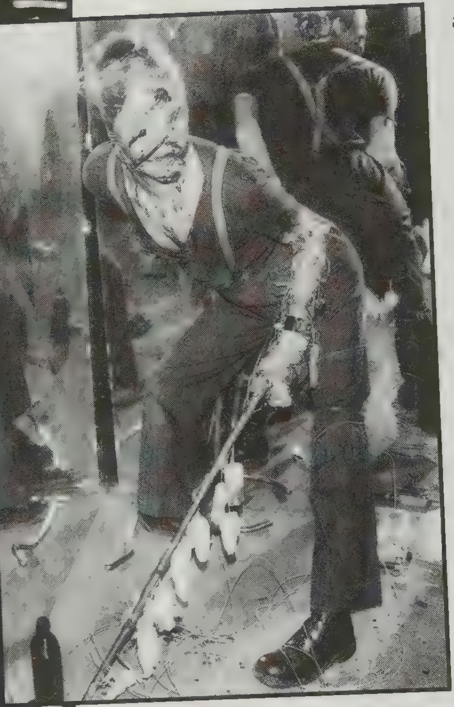
Gen and I met in Manhattan's East Village at the famed Odessa restaurant. In the decade since, Gen's added immense body modification to his repertoire, to the point of sharing breast implants with his late partner Lady Jaye Breyer, and facial structure alterations. Gen carries on Lady Jaye's existence through a fusion of their physical selves. Once Neil Megson, now Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, the recreator speaks.

All photos unless noted courtesy Genesis Breyer P-Orridge.

SHADE RUPE: When did you relocate to New York?
GENESIS BREYER P-ORRIDGE: I moved to New York in February, 1996, driving one of those great big twenty-five-foot trucks with a trailer on the back, with the car on the trailer and four cats in cat boxes inside the car. Everything. And we had to take the southern route because of the snow. So it took six days of driving. And the last part of the journey I drove forty hours without sleeping.

Were you alone?
No, I was with Miss Jackie. We drove together. Most of the time we took turns, but in the last stretch I just kept going. I got into that so-tired-that-you're-not-tired-anymore state of mind, and just kept going and going and going, like the little pink bunny.

Originally you had been invited to visit California. What brought you to New York?
Basically lack of money. We were offered a cheap rent on an apartment, so we moved for financial reasons. And also, ironically, to have privacy. It was the best place to just disappear and be left



alone. I needed time off. I don't believe in doing things just because I've done things before.

It was time to reassess, take stock, and decide: Do I want to say anything anymore? If I do, what is it I want to say? What are the reasons I'm doing this? Why did I begin? Am I still doing it for the same reasons? And how do I want to prioritize how I use my time in my life?

Had you asked yourself these questions many times before?

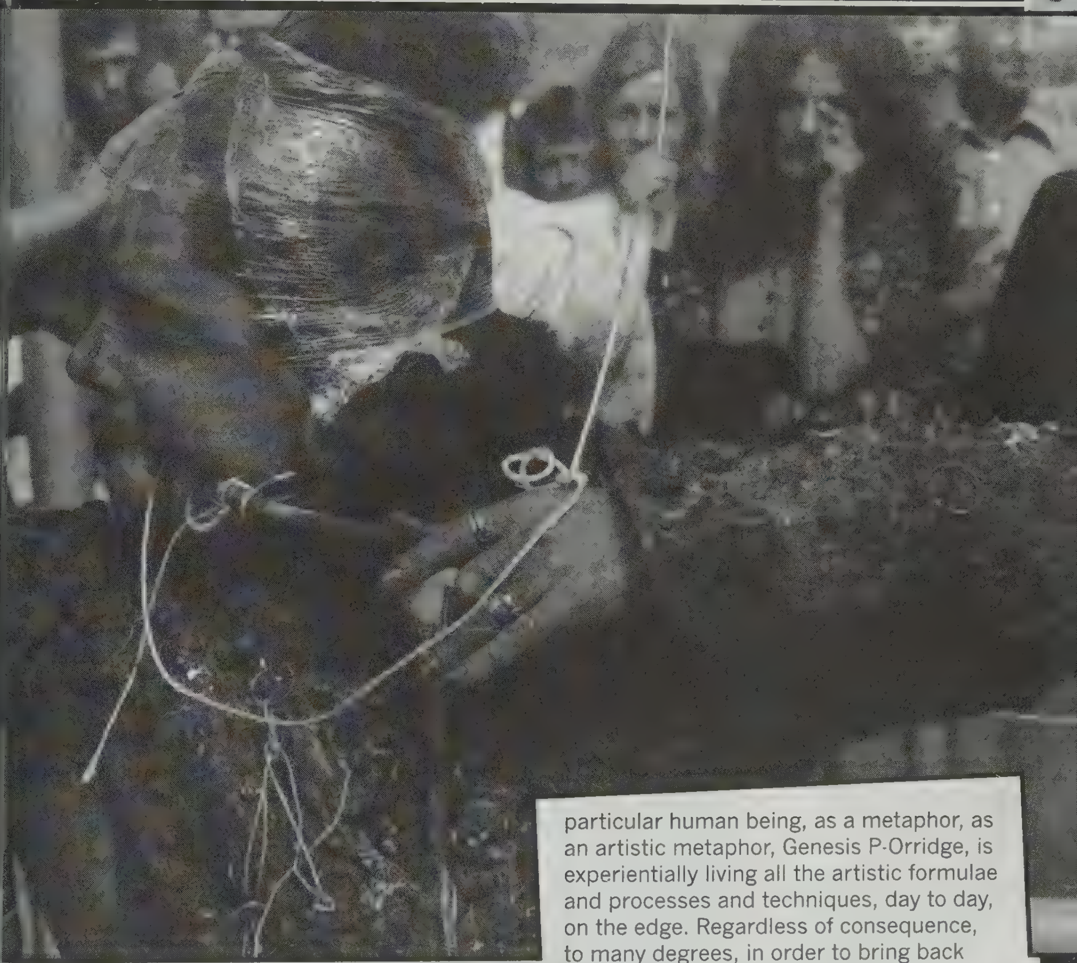
Oh, yeah. That's why I terminate projects approximately every ten years. I terminate the project on the assumption that it should have said something useful by now, or else I've failed miserably. And if it says something useful, then it's run its course, and my job is then to decide: Is there something else to do and, if so, what is it?

And, in a sense, to contradict the previous message in order to keep people awake and changing. Anything habitual disturbs me, because I'm a great believer in living and creating in present and future time, rather than nostalgic time.

I think that in 1965, Neil Andrew Megson had a vision that it was possible in a post-Warhol, post-beatnik contemporary world to create an artist as the metaphor itself. Because art ultimately is a metaphor for ways of being, to comprehend and perceive the changing form of consciousness and perception. And by doing that, to assist in the psychic hygiene of the species. That's what I think art really is. It can be a spiritual perception or it can be purely creative. It can be nihilistic, it can be many other takes on that, but the basic path is semi-shamanic, both for the artist and for the effect of the work.

So the work itself is not in that equation. The effect of the work and the intention of the person making the work are really the key to Art with the

Top: Genesis in performance with COUM Transmissions.



big A, as opposed to entertainment, show business or decoration or conceptuality or whatever it might be.

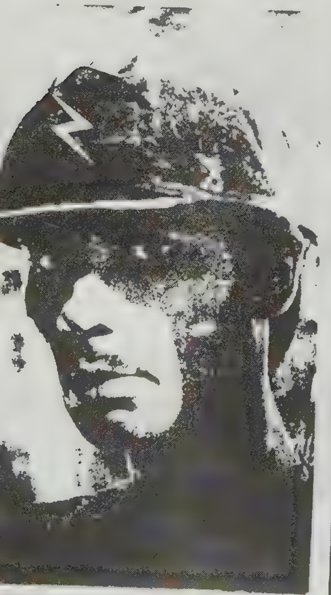
And, to his credit, he decided to create the metaphorical multimedia artistic character called Genesis P-Orridge, and immerse himself in that character to an absolute degree, in order to see what would happen. To take it beyond the steps of previous people, and become the metaphor, the artistic metaphor.

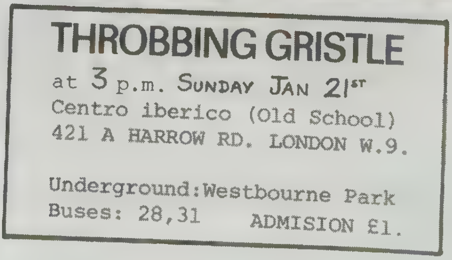
Therefore, that is the one constant, that character, that fictional/non-fictional character of Genesis P-Orridge is ultimately the large jigsaw of which the other things are parts. So that's the constant, the nearest to a formula there is, is that this particular human being, as a metaphor, as an artistic metaphor, Genesis P-Orridge, is experientially living all the artistic formulae and processes and techniques, day to day, on the edge. Regardless of consequence, to many degrees, in order to bring back information on behalf of the species.

Do you also feel a role as an educator is involved in there? As an artist, as a creator?
I think that perception opens it up to be all-encompassing. And, in the end, you hope that one word, one phrase, one song, one piece of painting, one book, one essay, one conversation, if just one can truly contribute towards a devastating improvement in our behavior as human beings. Something that helps evolution towards high consciousness instead of reactionary consciousness, then it was worthwhile.

But the attempt to do it is good enough. And if that happens many times, then you are blessed. But that doesn't mean it's yours. And that's where I finally understood

COUM Transmissions performance, 1975.





THROBBING GRISTLE
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what Brion Gysin meant when he said "poets don't own words." The beneficial effect of the art is not your property. You are a channel. It's very mediumistic, in my opinion.

All great art is mediumistic and inspirational. No matter how much it might not look like it on first glance. That's the thing. Now, for me, therefore, the obvious way to succeed as an artist, whether it be a musician or a painter or a writer, is to find a unique voice or style or trademark of some kind, and then keep doing it relentlessly, and refining it relentlessly.

But never, ever abandon it. Keep on and on and on and on. And eventually one day you will be known as "the person who paints stripes", "the guy who kills pigs."

Your fifteen minutes of eternity.

The guy with the vibrato voice, Roy Orbison, etc. And people will say, "I know who that is singing that song. That's Led Zeppelin." Or, "I know who painted that picture. Francis Bacon." Or, "I know who did that soup can. Andy Warhol." Or, "I know who wrote this book with young teenage boys ejaculating over lizards. William Burroughs." It's that simple. You knew as I was saying it that it was William Burroughs.

Now, this is fine, and some great work is done that way. I just felt compelled to see if there was more. Did it really have to reside, success and achievement and communication, does it really have to rest on formula? Does it really mean you have to repeat yourself all your life, and be a fanatic about saying the same thing over and over and over again? Maybe. It just didn't seem enough to me. And as I say, I just felt compelled to try and go further. To go beyond into what I didn't know, into what I hadn't felt before, into what I hadn't seen and heard before, into areas where there was no language for it yet, and retrieve speculations. At the very least, speculations, suggestions.

And then, as a matter of responsibility, act them out, to see what happened. Because if it's something that hasn't occurred before, you have to act it out in order to see what it might be. And if you're going to act it out, the best challenge and deadline, so that you don't get lazy and you don't just think it and not bother to do it, is to do it in public. And say, "Oh, my goodness, I have to walk onstage in one hour's time and talk." So I have to believe that this process of retrieving ideas and sharing them will sustain and support me in a crisis moment, in a moment of stress, if you like. And that's how I've worked.

So the formula is actually anathema to me, because then I just become. I can only achieve one level of creative expression. I can't move into the unknown.

Going onto a stage, are you ever thinking: I need to be a certain something so that my audience, these people sitting in front of me, will want to associate with me or want to hear what I'm saying? Or is that not even in your thoughts?

No. One of the reasons it's more and more stressful and creates more anxiety as days go by—now it's harder than ever to go on a stage, not easier—is because I'm so rigorous in the demands I make upon myself.

Of course, it's nice to walk on and have everybody feel comfortable, and be appreciated, and not have to do the basic preamble of explaining and reeducating and deconditioning. So at the peak of any given project, like Psychic TV, it was fabulous to feel that connection with everybody, that third mind, and to know that maybe for that four hours, you were telling the story of an ad hoc tribe of similar-minded beings.

But at the beginning of Psychic TV, the first album, Force the Hand of Chance, the first track just drifting with an orchestra, was an absolute rejection of Throbbing Gristle. So much so that when we mixed it and played it back in the studio, I cried with laughter.

And I cried with laughter saying, "Can you imagine when the TG fans hear this, what they're going to think?"

And I got great pleasure out of that. Not out of perversity, but because I knew it would mean: Those who understood the idea of process and change and evolution and at least hoping sincerely to one day gain wisdom, would get it, and would go, "Oh, my goodness, it's time to think again."

And some might go, "He's an asshole. We don't want to listen to him anymore." And that's fine. Because then my life is no longer relevant to them, and the things that I'm experiencing are no longer relevant and don't resonate. And I can't assume they always will with one person. And I'm not going to play games to keep one person with me by tricking them, by making it feel too familiar.

Or even some people will go, "How fabulous! He didn't do what I expected. That's so cool!" And those are the people I want to speak to. Because they're going: "We're just interested to watch what's happening to you. And sometimes it's useful to me. Sometimes it doesn't make any sense to me, but I'm glad you're still doing it, and you're not just pandering."

So that is more built in for me to confound the audience as a test. And it's not a test—how can I put this? It's not malicious in any way, and it's not "I know better." It's "I have to be honest with you. I can't keep saying that. That was ten years ago. And I'm glad to say that as my intention was to experience life differently by doing that, I have to tell you at this point, I am experiencing life differently, so I can't tell you that anymore. Because that was someone else."

Just as today, I can approximate what I think I remember Neil Megson thinking when he created Genesis. And I can pretty much guess by looking at my own notes and diaries, what Genesis thought in 1970 about why he was doing COUM Transmissions. But

I can't in all honesty say that I feel those reasons, because thank goodness I've been blessed with changing.

Even inside Throbbing Gristle, though, there were variations. You can throw on Throbbing Gristle's Greatest Hits, and you've got poppy synth mixes alternating with the more 'industrial' sounds. Even there it was an alternation. I think that's a pretty good example of that.

And even Psychic TV, you've got entire concerts of noise, and then you've got Godstar.

Dreams Less Sweet to Force the Hand of Chance, to the live records. Each of those live records would end up being an entirely different record.

Each project, in a sense, is an aesthetic problem solver. Throbbing Gristle had parameters. What would happen if we had no drummer, and none of us could play in a traditional way? And we ended up with the instruments that were just lying around that we had access to at the time.

What we believe is that there is a genius factor in everybody, which can be released by a way of thinking, by believing in creativity in and of itself. And that creativity worked because you learned to assemble something from raw materials that were available at the time, and assemble it to speak from your heart, really, and from your experiences, from your emotions.

And to describe a fragment of what we call reality, consensus reality, personal reality. That is exactly what all art really does. Therefore, it can be done with anything, any available materials. And that was the basic formula. That was the formula, the process. And that's why we used to say: The process is the product, and the product is the process.

I got a letter from a guy about the burn victim of Hamburger Lady, and it had such an impact on me, reading the letter. I thought, "Well, if this affects me so deeply, and I'm almost horrified to have read this, I feel almost sacrilegious to have intruded on somebody else's suffering in this way, by knowing of it."

I wish he hadn't told me, because now I have to live with knowing how fortunate I am, and how awful circumstances can be. It had that much impact on me, but in the end I'm glad I know this, because it's a humbling thing to realize, and it's cathartic, and if it gives you a sense of perspective on the blessings you get, then maybe that would be true for others.

Is there a way to honor that sequence of emotional reactions with sound? Between us,

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Throbbing Gristle.

can our formula still do that job? So then you have the words, and you service the words with sound, and you service the words and their impact upon your nervous system and your emotional makeup, with the sound. So that it's a complete piece in and of itself.

That's why the style doesn't matter. If you want to do a song about Brian Jones at his peak, when he was writing catchy three-and-a-half-minute pop songs with the Rolling Stones, then inevitably the odds are the backdrop will be a reference to him at his peak.

Which is again honoring his skills and his contribution that went unnoticed, which is what the lyrics are talking about and saying: Remember this? Wasn't it great? Hear that sound? Wasn't that authentic?

And we rented the same musical instruments that were played at the time in 1965 by the Rolling Stones, so it was authentic. And we worked in a recording

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studio where they and the Beatles and people had recorded. We got as close as we could to the source of what the subject was.

What period was that?
That would be 85, Psychic TV. That was just for Godstar. That one track. We went to all that trouble with the analog tapes, the studio, everything. And we used real tape delays and real tape phasing. We didn't use any digital effects. We used all original equipment.

And I still have a filing cabinet drawer full of interviews, memorabilia, photographs, all kinds of stuff. Something like 150 press cuttings of research on Brian Jones, just to get the songs to feel right. So I immersed myself in Brian Jones for a 3.5 minute pop song. And that's the difference in technique.

It's not like, "Oh, let's write a catchy tune and try and have a hit record." It was, "This song has to be done this way. It doesn't matter whether it's successful financially. This has to be done this way, to the best of our ability, in order to honor the idea."

And people go, "Why don't you do another song like Godstar?" Because we did it. And that's not the topic.

You could take what Brian Jones created, and take that extra, that epiphenomenon, that third reaction/interaction with Brian Jones, rather than studying every movement, every hairstyle.
That's why I've been talking to people who knew him. I met both of his illegitimate sons, one of his ex-girlfriends. Two, actually. Two ex-girlfriends.

And that was all for the intent of recording a song? Or also your own personal fascination?
It just started to happen. It's almost as if, as Brion Gysin said, with cut-ups, we cut it up to see what's really there. One of the other side effects seems to be that twenty-three effect, which is that the symmetry of the universe

is revealed, and uncannily all these people appear in your life with the information that you've started to seek. It's almost as if, if you invoke it, it comes to you.

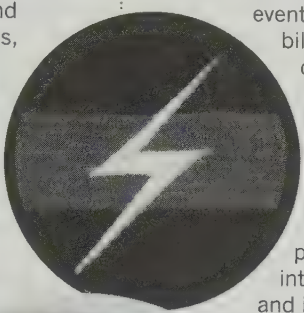
And until you get to a concert and somebody walks up to you and goes, "Here's this jacket Brian Jones used to wear. I thought you should have it, because of the song." And I put it on and it fits me. And I still have the jacket. And it's someone I've never met again.

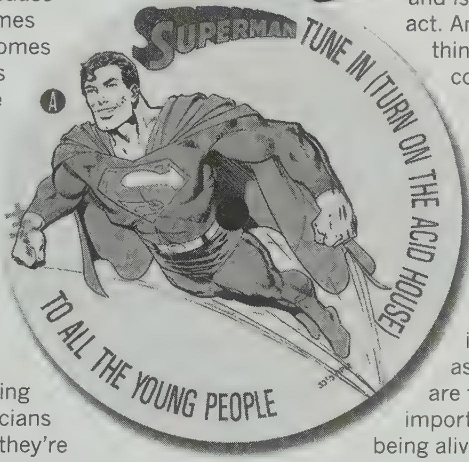
So, it's a great and incredibly magical and fascinating experience to work this way. Because your entire life becomes enriched. And it becomes exponential as it gets more enriched. More things are invoked, more talismans appear, and more fantastic and amazing symmetrical events occur. People arrive in your life connected and stay connected.

Until you are working with the Master Musicians of Jajouka, and then they're living in your house. And then you are, you know? That wasn't in the front part, the conscious part of your mind. In your mind was to do this as perfectly and meticulously as possible in honor of an idea and a person or an event or a topic.

Which leads us perfectly, really, to Thee Majesty. Because Thee Majesty is the result of observing all of that, the Psychic TV and, well, okay, so what's happening here is words are being serviced by the sound.

What would happen if we actually took this a step further and said, "Words are being serviced by the sound?" Therefore the sound is only in service of the words. Instead of it being semi-conscious, let's make this absolutely conscious. The words are pristine and in authority over the sound. Because words invoke and make things happen. Words seem to be alive.




SUPERMAN
A
TUNE IN (TURN ON THE ACID HOUSE)
TO ALL THE YOUNG PEOPLE

And the more I said "Brian Jones", the more Brian Jones appeared to people, living people, through pieces of paper, through clothing, through objects, through events, through things that were billions to one against the odds of this synchronicity happening. What is this?

So if you want to look for a theme through everything, it's that I really believe at this point that creativity with a clarity of purpose and an honorable intent makes things happen and is an invoking, magical act. And that this is a good thing. And that if you become conscious of it, your life is improved and enhanced, and perhaps you do begin to comprehend and sit more comfortably within your place in the universe.

And that was what I actually always wanted. And so metaphor and ideas in and of themselves, as symbolized by words, are fantastically, critically important in the experience of being alive and are one of the big clues to making sense of the universe.

When you do start finding more of exactly what's important to you, it's almost like some sort of magnetic center occurs. I'm aware of the way humans are pattern-finders, so of course we'll see how things "match up" because we're already set up for that. But it's still fun to play with. You park your car and you get out, and you're in stall number twenty-three.

Until you almost laugh and shrug and go, "Well, of course." I think it's an invisible language.

You start finding these elements around, you realize you really are living in this absolutely vibrant self-visualized world, where everything does become all of this,

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Previous page: Throbbing Gristle. This page: Psychic TV's record label with the first appearance on vinyl of the phrase 'acid house'.

and these things become more and more alive.

Which is why I think you immerse yourself in it. And that's what art really is. Real art is immersing yourself in the divine. And the divine is expressed in this material plane, in an invisible language. And one of the great contributions that Burroughs and Brion Gysin made for all of us, and it's very significant and it's still not fully appreciated, was the cut-up.

The cut-up really seems to disassemble and reassemble reality as we think of it, from objective to subjective, and reveal that this pattern of intersections is there, quite definitely there. That if you can start to appreciate and become amicable with this language, and surrender to the kindness of the universe, surrender to this invisible symmetry, then you're at least at the point where you might find wisdom, and you will certainly get closer to finding peace.

And at the same time, you'll have a fabulous adventure, because life is just so much more inspirational when you make friends with and come to terms with this phenomenon. And it's not insignificant, I think, that after the last war, all around 1950, but that period, the atom got split, consciousness got not split so much as reintegrated with LSD, and the cut-up appeared. And those three things, which were all about taking apart and reassembling, basically led to the massive explosion both technologically and neurologically, and culturally, that we've seen since.

I tend to feel at this point, and the one reason that we're so focused on Thee Majesty, and also that I'm making

Lady Jaye and Genesis as One, Two and Three.

paintings and art again, too, is I suspect this is all a precursor for a radical change in consciousness for the species. I think that's essential. That at this point in time, just as Burroughs and Gysin said, writing is fifty years behind painting, and in a sense Throbbing Gristle said music was fifty years behind painting and writing, they're more or less all at the same place.

Perhaps when the Mayan calendar runs out in 2012, it just means that time will shift, because consciousness will shift. And we have a choice coming, which is to remain a primitive species that just is reactive, that just thrashes and has a pecking order and tries to invade each other's territory and have a top dog, all that stuff, that's redundant. Not only is it redundant, it is the path to destruction. And there has to be some evolutionary solution to that. And I believe it must be the beginning of, at the very least, the beginning of the seeding of a new form of consciousness.

ble' From N Coras

So you still have this view—I'm sorry to say "still", but you have this optimism. I'm only thirty-one, but I think if I grew up in the 60s, and here's the future, it's multicolored and candy-colored and it's all going to grow and we're all going to blend, and then the 80s happened and Reagan gets elected—I don't know if that would put a black cloud over this utopian thinking. Do you find any frustration? Do you look around and see people's behaviors and just think, "It's never going to happen, it's never going to happen"?

First of all, if it doesn't happen, it doesn't matter. Because the universe will unfold anyway. And the human species, believe it or not, is not the be all and end all of the universe unfolding. It's one tiny speck of dust in infinity. None of us really can understand what infinity might be. So you have to view what you do, even on an everyday mundane level, in terms of looking back from the future. So you judge from the future backwards.

I just finished reading The Origins of Consciousness in the Bicameral Mind by Julian Jaynes, which I would recommend everybody tries to find and read. His basic premise is that up till 3,000 years ago, the right and left brain were split. And in moments of stress, the right brain would resolve problems with strategies, and would be heard as voices of authority, and would be obeyed. And then due to various natural calamities that created migrations, which created wars and territorial fights, that two-brain consciousness broke down slowly. And if you look through myths and writings that still exist from that era, people began to say they no longer heard the voices of the gods.

Spatial time and a sense of an analog subjective "I" didn't appear until 3,000 years ago. Before that people didn't have a concept of "before me" and "after me" and consequence. That change, that massive breakdown in which our consciousness, which includes having memory, in and of ourselves, subjective realities, didn't occur. We were actually completely different beings.

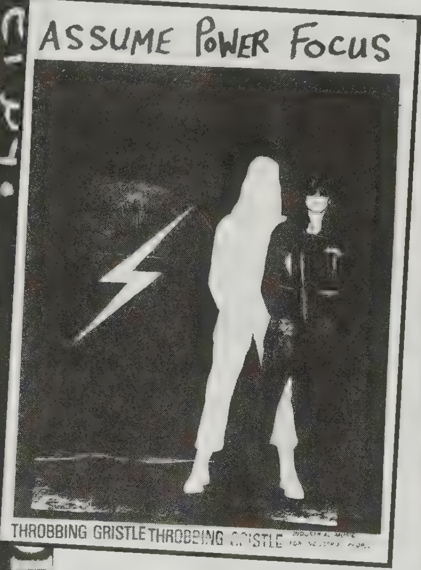
That might mean that we go through another dark age that could last another 1,000 years, because it took 1,000 years for that change to really resolve itself. It might take another 1,000 years, and that might be what this millennium thing is about in some form: that there is an evolutionary biological clock. It's this 3,000-year cycle for our consciousness to integrate and change.

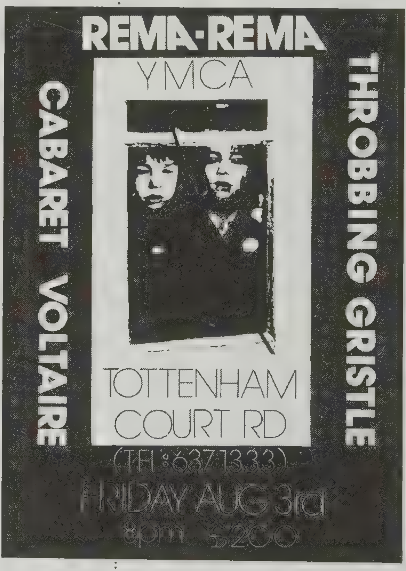
One isn't thinking in terms of: Will it happen while I'm alive, will it happen while my children are alive? One is thinking: Will it ever happen? Probably.

When human consciousness, like you say, this 'I', began, do you feel there was an actual event that occurred? Like I used to feel there would be an 'event', but everything actually seems gradual.

There was a series of events. There were some huge floods and some huge earthquakes, etc., which might be why that's in the prophecies, because that's what happened last time. So it would seem that, if one was visualizing "How could this occur again?" that it would be something else like that.

It was the first time, really, that tribes that had been city-based ended up being forced to invade each other's territories on a large scale, to try and survive, and would realize that other groups, other tribes spoke different languages and listened to different gods.

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And so all that stuff in the ancient myths about resolution of all these problems is a literal description of the adjustment of conscious reality. In The Iliad, you don't have people speaking with a knowledge of 'I', and responsibility for actions. A god tells them to do this, a god says, "Go and invade Troy," and so on.

We have a residual of that both in people who are mediums, in shamanistic behavior, and even in schizophrenic behavior. That's the bicameral mind. People have begun to reassess the bicameral mind as being not just an inconvenience, but also being a useful visionary tool.

That's part of what happened with the psychedelic revolution. So I would argue, at least as a speculation, that a mixture of the psychedelic revolution, coming stress through natural events, natural occurrences, plagues, whatever it might be, might be a precursor to an evolutionary change in consciousness.

One would hope that would be the creation of a third mind for everyone. And that might also be what the World Wide Web is part of, too; a metaphor for that.

It's actually interesting hearing you say it might be part of this millennial happening, because then—I haven't placed much importance on it at all, solely because—

Whose calendar is it?

Yeah, exactly. For the Jews it's the year 5,760 or something.

Exactly. I know of lots of people in Tibet who would go, "Oh, we had that one a while ago."

I wasn't thinking of it so much in terms of the calendar. I was thinking more that biochemically we seem to be reaching critical mass, because of the way we populate small areas. We overpopulate small areas as cities. There's more than enough land for everyone to have a big space.

But the necessity of the industrial revolution was cities. The opportunity of the technological revolution is the end of that necessity. The migration from the cities. But that's happening in parallel with the very real possibility of various plagues, diseases, and ecological and infrastructure calamities.

And that's not me being pessimistic. That's just being logical about it. It may not happen. We're pretty good at adjusting. We have much better forecasting abilities than we ever did. And even the really stupid people at the top are aware that it wouldn't

Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson and Genesis, 1980.

be in anyone's interest, usually, for this kind of stuff to occur.

Only the fanatics want Armageddon, and even then, it would be a limited Armageddon. So that's not really what I'm thinking about. I'm thinking more in terms of a combined pressure on the species to resolve its strategies differently. And that might be a thousand-year process.

Throbbing Gristle in Berlin, 1979.

So I'm not thinking in the next ten years. Maybe by the year 3000 or 4000, we would look back and go, "Wow, weren't they silly! They were primitive. But, okay, without them we wouldn't be here now."

I feel that after the year 2000 is over, people are going to just look around, and things aren't going to be exploding. There won't be pestilence, there won't be seven years. We won't see people flying into the atmosphere—

There might be four or five terrorist acts.

I think of that especially here in New York. Some people are going to just want to make their point. Even the kids in Columbine. That date. Hitler's birthday. Who the hell knew when Hitler's birthday was? Now they've put that date in the minds of this entire country as well as the world.

You know, in Europe, various right-wing groups actually did do little acts on that date anyway, for quite a while. So in Europe that's not uncommon.

We just didn't pay as much attention to it as they did.

America never pays attention to what happens outside America. Unless it affects America.

Or New York, too. Who the hell knows what happens beyond New York?

Yeah. And who bothers to go and check what's going on in South Georgia day to day? Nobody.

The last Throbbing Gristle album said, "Mission is terminated", across the cover. Do you feel that you're on a mission? Do you feel any, I don't want to say proselytizing, but in a way the one piece you did during Thee Majesty, where you're saying, "Thank you, Jesus. Please, Jesus. Come save me

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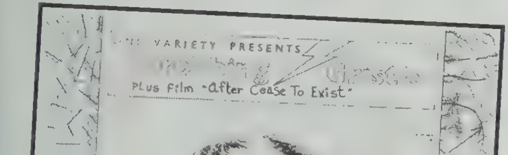
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now, Jesus. I haven't been good all my life, but now I'll be good for you, Jesus."

Do you feel any sort of need in yourself to educate, to raise the masses on your own? Or do you feel comfortable letting evolution take its course and see where it may go, and only work on yourself?

I think that I've come to a point where—that's a really good question—where I have to take time off and remember to work on myself, and not get trapped into the sense of obligation to the outside world to such a degree that that becomes habitual, and that assumes that I have something to say.

And that piece at the end, that was just made up on the spot. I hadn't envisioned getting an encore for Thee Majesty. It never crossed my mind, funnily enough. So we went upstairs and I said, "What are we going to do? We can't go back on. How could Thee Majesty possibly do an encore?"

And Larry and Brian said, "Well, we have to. Listen." And I went, "Oo, God, what am I going to say?" They said, "You've got to do something." And I said, "Well, Larry, just go and start

playing on the tablas and I'll try and think of something." And then I just—I don't even remember a word I said.

Luckily there's a tape, which I haven't listened to yet, so I'll be able to find out. It was just made up on the spot. So it probably was pretty straightforward. I don't know. But it was honest. It was something that crosses that mind, and sometimes that's good enough. Just go, "Hey, guess what? I'm not that special. I have these moments of self-doubt."

There's one thing that I'm interested in, though. Earlier you were talking about the genesis of Hamburger Lady, and when you read that story, you felt, "Omigod, I'm invading this woman's life." It seemed to me that, especially being a disgruntled teenager, getting my Throbbing Gristle, "Very friendly, Myra Hindley", that there was a sense of menace about Throbbing Gristle.

And even reading about COUM Transmissions, we would read about you eating a black egg and vomiting and licking it up. It seemed that there was some sense of menace or attack to your sound, to what you were doing at that time. Is that true?
I think so. I think that we were throwing down a gauntlet. We were also disgruntled and alienated and dissatisfied, and there was a massive sense of hypocrisy in our culture, which was our environment at the time. Again, it was fortunate that we had a sense of alienation and anger at hypocrisy and double standards and the fabric of rich society, which is so class-ridden.

And the sense of a need for a new musical, lyrical language, to describe this strange change that had occurred in society since the 60s. Something really different had happened by the mid-70s towards the 80s.

It was a reading of the inevitable, but also, as with many projects that worked, we saw the inevitable. What was inevitable in the culture, and happened to be in the right place at the right time, with the drive to speak. That's why it worked. The classic thing of other people feeling exactly the same way, so it made sense to them.

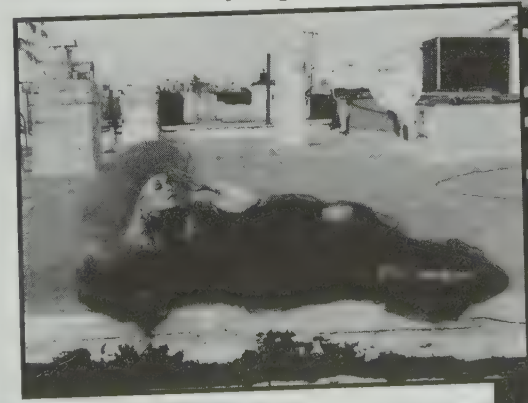
And that's one of these blessings that you can't predict. You've got to follow your feelings and your instinct, and go, "This feels so right to be doing this in this style, at this time, with these things in mind, and choosing these subjects."

And one thing I think TG really did supply forever was a massive liberation of what the lyric could be about. The Velvet Underground, in a sense, began that. And I think TG finished the job. From then on anything could be a topic of what was called a song, and that it was absolutely justified, and it was almost a form of pragmatic journalism.

And that meant that people all over the world had a new vocabulary that they could recognize and adjust to suit their purposes. And I think that's one of the huge contributions TG made.

I like the way persuasion works. Your suggestions that you could influence people and they will behave accordingly. Just with a wave, with a look of the eye, with a twitch, whatever, and you can see right into people. I thought that was pretty wonderful.
Thank you. It's a blessing, and it's difficult to maintain. Your own standards for yourself become higher, or they should anyway. So it becomes more and more difficult. I suspect that's part of the cultural biology, that I'm fifty now. So I have to make sure I'm not lazy and forget to take care of Genesis and those close to Genesis, and that I give them prioritized time.

So that in another twenty years I can't look back and go, "Well, I neglected this, or I neglected that." I have to make sure that I try and take care of everything.



Previous page: Gen with a big gun. This page: Photo by Marie Losier and Bernard Yenelouis from their film *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye.*

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This page: Psychic TV. Next page: Gen and Lady Jaye on a psychedelic bed.

Thee Majesty began a little over a year ago, then? So will we have another eight-and-a-half years of Thee Majesty?
I have no idea. I'm letting it ride. It's already got a life of its own, which is a good sign. I think it'll always be a much more low-key thing. I don't think we're ever going to want to do great big tours or do things constantly. I think that will be the umbrella for occasional special statements that we feel necessary.

So we won't ever get a big giant Psychic TV sort of show?
I don't think so.

It's much quieter. It was nice actually having it be in such an intimate environment. There's a—I don't want to say torch song—but there's something about your presence, and the little twist that you give.
I think it's some form of theater of irony, and that it's somewhere between theater of irony and twenty-first-century cabaret. And that that's a good thing. And it may be, again, something that's bubbling under, that's going to happen. And that is part of what we see with the revival of interest in the spoken word and simplification.

As the environment gets busier and busier, as you were saying, and noisier and noisier, and there's more and more people connected to more and more network systems, that perhaps isolation and intimacy are going to become priceless. And this is a recognition of that necessary shift, for one's own personal growth and sanity.

How did you come in contact with Bryin Dall?
At the post office.

Here in New York?
Just around the corner. I was standing in line waiting for a parcel. Somebody else was in there and went, "Oh, Genesis!" Because

EXPOSED Evil cult thriving inside a temple

THIS VILE MAN CORRUPTS KIDS

Demi-god feeds pop fans on sex, sadism, and Devil rites

VILE: Genesis P. Orridge m
himself on cult murderer M

By SUE BISHOP

Gutter [redacted] band Psychic TV

TEENAGE pop fans are being exposed to Satanic rites, sadism and sex by the sickest man in Britain — greedy gutter guru Genesis P. Orridge.

The leader of rock band Psychic TV models himself on cult murderer Charles Manson and is corrupting thousands of impressionable youngster[redacted]

His self-styled "church", The Temple of Psychic Youth, lures [redacted]rs into his web of evil.

[redacted] a demi-god whose [redacted]

But today The Peopl[redacted]d side to this [redacted]o cares more [redacted]ic

[redacted]

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

[redacted] fan[redacted]

One recent pamphlet asked them to sell all their records and send the money to [redacted]

Sex orgies with Temple [redacted] even, were on stage at a gig a few weeks ago.

Groping

[redacted]mped around [redacted] drug-filled [redacted] from [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] sent through [redacted] transmission.

It shows scenes of a pregnant woman being tied to a dentist's chair and raped and a naked man being urinated on by Orridge.

The cult's initiation rites are [redacted]h-churning.

[redacted]e, of Stoke [redacted]don, whos[redacted] Neil Me[redacted]ages followers to spear their private parts with the double cross which has become the group's symbol, or tatoo it onto their bodies.

One ex-follower said: "He is on an evil power trip. Paula and he do a lot of sleeping around with the fans."

Teenage followers are believed to have desecrated churches in a mindless "statement" against established religion.

Orridge's former lover, one-time Throbbing Gristle singer [redacted] lust for money

Cage this evil pop monster

IT IS difficult to find [redacted] revealed on Page [redacted]

[redacted]

The police should now visit one of his shameful shows

TO PUT AN END TO THEM.

MENACE TO PEOPLE GIRL

PEOPLE investigator Sue Bishop has first hand experience of the menace of Genesis P. Orridge.

PEOPLE REPORTER

She left her home telephone number with cronies of the pop star in a bid to get an interview with him.

A couple of days later someone claiming to be from a local newspaper tricked her boyfriend into giving Sue's home address.

The next day, after various silent phone calls, a bouquet of flowers arrived — in a blatant attempt to make her boyfriend jealous.

With it came a loving note thanking Sue for a wonderful time.

Then Orridge turned up on Sue's doorstep at 3.30 am, dressed in the gold top hat he wears on stage, and woke her up by persistently ringing the doorbell.

She saw he was accompanied by two cronies and rang the police.

They picked him up two streets away and advised him to stop.

The next morning Sue found the double cross symbol nailed to her door.

they recognized me, they just blurted it out. And Bryin heard that exclamation and looked round and recognized me, too, and then he very politely came up and he said, "I hope you don't mind me saying so, but I just wanted to say I really like your work." And I said, "Thank you very much." And he said, "I have a small studio, but if you ever need to use it for anything, here's my phone number."

And then just after that I was asked to do some poems for Merzbow. I was not really connected in New York; I had been so reclusive. So I thought, "Oh, I'll ring that phone number. He seemed okay." So I rang him up and said, "Is that a sincere offer? You know, I'm stuck. I don't really have a budget, but I'd love to record some poems. Can I come and check it out?" And he says, "Sure." And I went down and instantly we both knew there was a special connection, a special magic, as they say, and we should continue to do things together and see what happened. So it grew out of that.

Miss Jackie was the one who thought of the title. Originally Larry Thrasher suggested Her Majesty. And we all agreed that he was onto something, but that wasn't quite right, because it was implying that it was mine, if I was going to be the singer. And that wasn't the idea.

So we were stuck with it almost, and then one evening she just suddenly said, "It should be Thee Majesty." And as soon as she said it, Bashir was there and Larry, and we all went "Yes, of course." So she resolved it. She was the problem solver. And as soon as she said that, everything else began to make sense. And that's when we began to perform as Thee Majesty, from when she finally gave it the name. Which is that whole process when naming something gives it power.

When did you and Jackie meet?
In 1993, in New York, through mutual friends.

Was it an instant connection? Because now you're spending so much time with each other, and you're together.
It wasn't a knowing, instant connection. We were both intrigued immediately by each other, I think. But we, very fortunately, spent more than a year just gradually seeing each other when I would be in New York. Calling each other on the phone, and just in a very comfortable and, I think, in a very positive long-term way.

We just grew closer and closer and more and more fascinated. Realized that we're probably soulmates who were always intended to meet. And I think that's when I started to get the energy to refocus and consider how to be creative again.

Messages started to come through again, to be corny. Ideas started flying back into my head. And I thought, "Oh, wow! There is something else to do. That's nice."

Thee Bearer ov Thee Psychick Cross. Photo Shade Rupe.

Other people can really do that. You just get the right vibration. There's just something that clicks.
You never know who it is. You never know. I think that's part of that language we were talking about earlier, that once you start to sit comfortably with the invisible language, you get a really useful intuition for the people

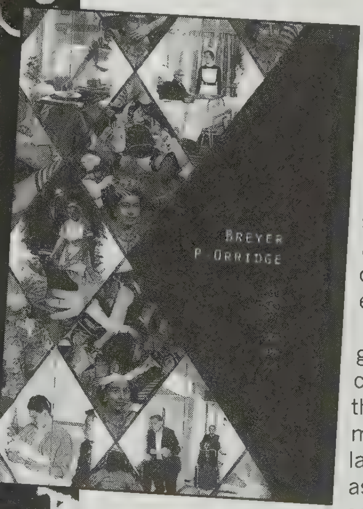
addlergate, Derb
AGENTS ONLY

that are meant to connect with you, and collaborate. But who knows how long?

You start to recognize like-minded people. And that's a really helpful way of saving time.

You can learn something from almost anybody. You can sit down with a plumber and learn something.
Everybody has stories.

Exactly. But some people are going to offer more than others. But those same people are going to offer something so much more than someone else when they're with you.
If you've made the choice with your life to try and share through culture with a larger than usual audience, in the hope of resonance, then as time goes by and you realize the preciousness of time. It becomes essential to allocate your time as effectively as you can, on behalf of everyone. Not for selfish reasons alone, but also on behalf of being effective.



One of the great blessings of comprehending that third-mind invisible language is that, as time seems to compress, as you get older, then the utilization of that time becomes more and more of an honorable obligation upon you as an individual.

But it also seems that you also find out how to build a team faster, and how to build a more and more effective team each time. And I think that's what's happening now. There are just the most beautiful, amazing people surrounding me. Larry and Bryin and Miss Jackie, and Eric Heist who's collaborating on all the paintings. Just fabulous people.

I can only say at this moment in my life I feel ultra blessed, incredibly fortunate. And I feel much happier in every sense than I've ever been. And I'm hoping that that's going to feed all the other things I do, in the healthiest and most useful way, too.

Growing up with Psychic TV, we would see Caresse on the cover of the records and hear her sing. Where is she now?
Caresse lives with me and Jackie in Brooklyn.

She's here now?
Absolutely, yeah. She goes to school in Manhattan. She's seventeen. She's a marvelous young lady.

That's so great. Is she pursuing anything creative herself?
She's about to graduate, so she's just incredibly, incredibly busy doing college applications. She's doing an internship with TVT Records. She just did all the online marketing and research for Buffy the Vampire Slayer. She's a fantastically kind, thoughtful, driven person. She's great.

Genesse is fourteen now; she's very overtly creative. She's writing metaphysical poetry and short stories, and she does really intricate drawings. They are both fascinating, wonderful young ladies, wonderful girls. I'm really proud just to be able to hang out with them, as well as having the good fortune to be their father. It's really just nice to be with them. They're endlessly interesting.

You've created your artwork as flat pieces of vinyl with grooves in it and with little disks. And you've also created your artwork, your daughters, with your sperm. You're truly living art. Not only as yourself, but even beyond yourself, even just the effect that you'll have on the people that read this interview, the people that click onto a website.
I don't think I can take credit for that. I think if I'm a catalyst, that's the best I could say. Both my children, all the people I know, are absolutely responsible for all the gifts they have. And I'm just blessed that they happen to find it appropriate to be around me sometimes.

You're a lot luckier than Cher. And you have just as many outfits, too!
I'm working on it! I'm working on it!

"I like Japanese subtitles. They're the best."

Udo in the title role of *Andy Warhol's Dracula.*

UDO KIER

FOR CULT FILM ENTHUSIASTS, UDO KIER NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION.

From his role as a tortured doomed hero in Mark of the Devil to his standout iconographic creations in Andy Warhol's Dracula and Andy Warhol's Frankenstein Udo stamped himself upon world cinema's collective psyche. His history is rich, populated with friendships with historic figures like Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Lars von Trier, and including pop culture entries with Madonna and her Sex book.

I first met Udo at the 2000 Fangoria convention and we had a round-table discussion with a few local friends. The interview was a gas and peppered by other fans at the table. Udo is a steady worker in Hollywood and beyond and his filmography continues to grow as I type. And with attributable lines like, "To know life... you must fuck death in the gall bladder!" we're all the better for it.

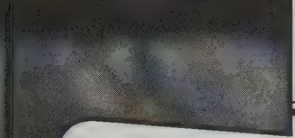
SHADE RUPE: You'll be shooting your film on digital video? You're using the Sony, the very small one?
UDO KIER: Yeah, Sony 1000. I got it from Lars von Trier, because I finished the film Dancer in the Dark with him. They shot all the musical scenes with 100 cameras.

Did you sing in it?
No. But they did it with 100 cameras, and Björk is the leading lady. She also wrote it with him, and she wrote all the music, of course. The whole story is that she is working in a factory, with Catherine Deneuve, making stainless steel sinks. And then she realizes that she and her son have the same illness; she is going blind and so will he. She's also working in a theater group, and the director says, "Look, you cannot work here anymore because you cannot play that part with glasses." So she goes home and she dreams, and in her dream there's this big number, with 100 cameras, and she's beautiful.

Yes, she is. Did you also go up to Seattle?
No, I didn't go there. Lars von Trier never travels, so he didn't go either.

Didn't he do it all by phone?
He did it all by phone.

Udo searching for virgin blood in *Andy Warhol's Dracula*, directed by Paul Morrisey.



I did that, for example, with Elias Merhige, for Shadow of the Vampire. He was in London, and I was in the studio. He was online for me, because I didn't want to fly to London, so he had to do it that way. So he was on a direct line, and he heard the way I was actually saying the lines, and he had the same picture of what we were shooting in the editing room. So he said: No, again, and dah-dah-dah, you know?

Do the Dogme rules concern you, that you have to edit the film yourself as well?
The problem I have is I like music in my film, and that is the biggest problem in Dogme films, because the music has to play live. So I did one concert, I shot one concert, and you just have to wait till they're finished or you just show half of their appearance, and promise to put the rest on the soundtrack. That's the problem.

Lighting, of course, has to be only the lighting in the room, but you can cheat. You can do what you want, but you have to confess. So I like to confess. So I'm going to cheat again and confess for a long time. Till I get bored. I just come dead at the end. I did not know violence. I die at the end. It'll be a chair falling in a pool. I shot that two days ago. And unfortunately the owner of the swimming pool didn't let me fall in with the wheelchair, because he was scared that I would drown.

Is this the first time you've really had an opportunity to do it because you could afford to do it on video now? You weren't able to before?
No, but the thing is, Dogme of course helped me to put these movies together, which means Lars von Trier gives me all equipment and I have Danish cameramen. And I was thinking, What would people think if I made a movie? Definitely they would think I would make a horror movie, or I go with German poets and show what I can do with them.

So I shut them up and I said, "I went with Arnold to Germany to do promotion for End of Days." And they all said of course, "What are you going to do for the millennium?" I said, "I'm going to sit in a wheelchair in front of the Hollywood sign." They said "What?"

And of course, Dogme helps every young filmmaker. The other problem is you cannot just do one. Spielberg wants to do one, and they didn't give him permission.

That's funny. I didn't know you needed actual permission.
Oh, yeah. You have to give them the script. They call themselves the Four Brothers, and they created the Dogme Manifesto. Thomas Vinterberg made The Celebration. The other one Lars named The Idiots, and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen made Mifune. And Kristian Levring's The King Is Alive comes out soon.

And so the thing is, you have to approach them, they have to agree to your script. And not only that, then you have to show them the film. You can shoot any form that you want, but you have to present it in 35mm Academy. So you have to blow it up, otherwise they don't even look at it.

And then they give you a certificate which you're allowed to have in front of the credits. So Steven Spielberg was in all the trade papers. They said: Steven Spielberg is making a movie like Lars von Trier, because he couldn't use Dogme. So not anybody can make a Dogme film. There would be already 200 or 500 of them.

Half of us would be Dogme filmmakers. Home movies could almost be Dogme films.
That's what I said. Paul Morrissey is the godfather of Dogme. He made Trash and Flesh and all these films on the weekend, when you had a camera. And they had no light, you see the light.

You can use light, but the light has to be in the room. You can only use the light you have. If you want the light on the table, you put the light there. Ten Dogme rules.

The situation with The Idiots and the censoring is just ridiculous.
I haven't seen it. A lot of people said that they didn't like it. I haven't seen the movie. I think that the best one is Mifune. It's better than Celebration.

I haven't seen it yet.
It's much better. But the films are all—they have all to do with incest and . . .

The Idiots wasn't even really released here. You can only see it on bootleg right now. That whole situation with the "Censored" bits. Lars wants to put the word "Censored" over the penises to get it released. But then I Stand Alone was released here, and there's actual pornography in the movie.
I prefer 'hardcore'.

Well, hardcore, there you go.
He made a great movie, people don't know it, called Epidemic.

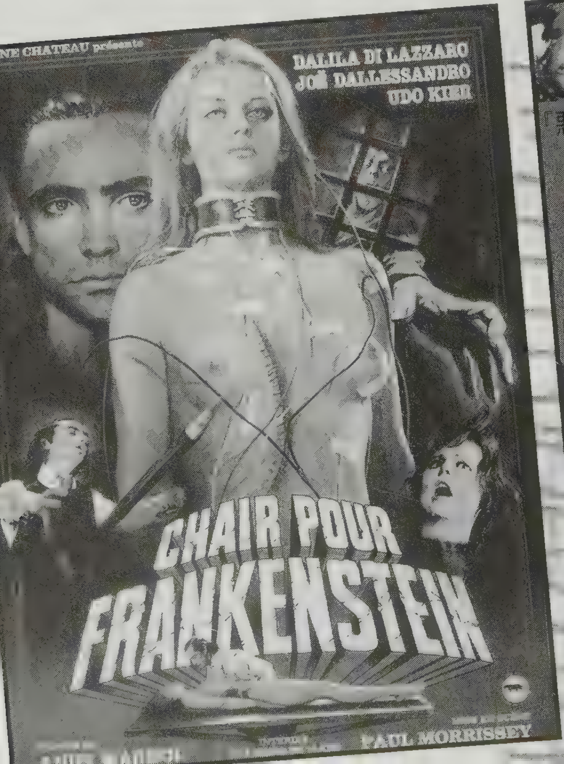
Yes, I saw it. At the Seattle International Film Festival. I love the "branding" with the word Epidemic, in the corner, during the whole movie.
All the time, the whole movie, in the corner, in red, in a black-and-white film, all the time.

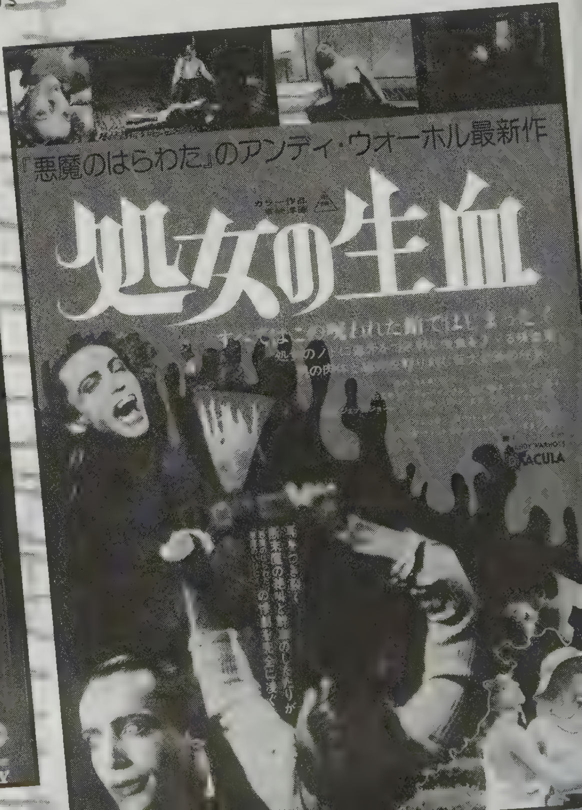
Yeah, exactly. Like Lifetime Channel, but Epidemic. How did you and Lars first meet?
We met in Mannheim at the festival, when I made a short film. I was in competition with him, and on the opening night I saw The Element of Crime, and I said to the directors of the festival, "There's only one person I want to meet. The person that made that movie."

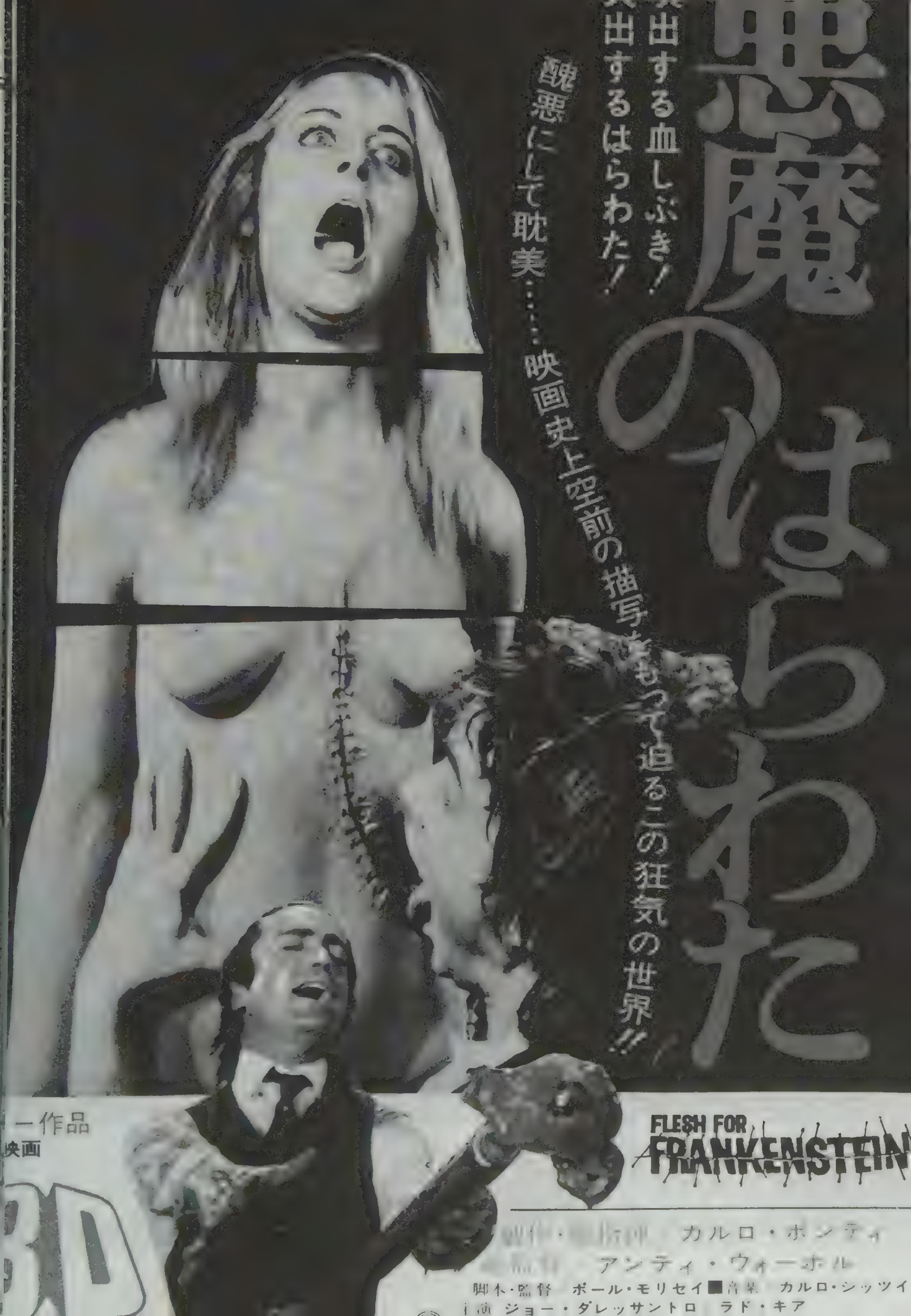
I expected somebody like Kubrick, all dressed in black and all intellectual, totally bizarre. And who comes in is Lars von Trier. He looked like a student, like a schoolboy. He was a wonderful person.

He's making a picture for thirty years called Dimension. We shoot three minutes every year. We have shot already for the last seven years, so every year I go, always around Christmas time, and I never ask questions about what the story is. I just do what he writes.

So you use script pages? It's not improvised?
No, it's like last year, Jean-Marc Barr and me coming up there in the editing room and two cameras running, and Lars says he doesn't like the movie anymore. And we were in front of the camera. So he wanted to recreate another style. It doesn't matter. As an actor, it's great because you know the film is




『悪魔のはらわた』のアンディ・ウォーホル最新作
処女の生血
ANDY WARHOL'S
DRACULA


悪魔のはらわた
噴出する血しぶき！
噴出するはらわた！
醜悪にして耽美……映画史上空前の描写をもって迫るこの狂気の世界!!
一作品
映画
3D
FLESH FOR
FRANKENSTEIN

製作・総指揮　カルロ・ポンティ
監修　アンディ・ウォーホル
脚本・監督　ポール・モリセイ■音楽　カルロ・シッツイ
主演　ジョー・ダレッサンドロ　ラド・キア

coming out in the year 2024, so you can do whatever you want.

If he says, "Run naked through Copenhagen," I would do that, because he's a genius.

I love his Medea.
I'm in that film. I played King Jason with a beard.

It's very Terence Stamp, the look you've got in that.
Yeah, it's not Udo Kier.

I've never seen you look that way before. I love the way people walk out of the background. They're like from ghost to reality.
Medea was a script which was bought by Danish television. Lars left it like it was, almost no dialog, all visual. Amazing, amazing camera shots. At the end when I die, we have a helicopter for me, because the grass was so high over my head. So he gave me four corners of the field to go crazy and run around, and it was shot from above.

And the helicopter was incredibly powerful, I could barely walk because of the wind. I really had to go against the wind of the helicopter. Great shot. The grass goes swoosh.

What is the number of your Dogme film?
Dogme #7.

Dogme #7. And you have a title for it already?
Yeah, it's called Broken Cookies. The story of Lola Stein.

This is the wheelchair one?
Yeah. The Broken Cookies title comes from a true story when I was a young boy, when my mother gave me fifty cents and I went and bought a big bag of broken cookies and I tried to eat them so carefully, to make them last all day. And I thought this was such a strong memory, so if I ever make a film, it has to be called Broken Cookies.

So we see this for two hours? We see the kid picking out the little—?
No, you see a transsexual in a wheelchair, making a living from telephone sex and collecting designer chairs because she can never sit in them.

Designer chairs?
Yes, because I personally collect designer chairs, so that's why I have them all in the movie. I play the president of a club called Outsiders on Wheels.

Do you have an actual script?
Oh, yeah, I wrote it.

Is this something that you've had for a while? Your own script idea? Or you wrote this after you were asked to do a Dogme film?
No, last summer I was doing two movies, one was starring in a movie with Martin Landau, The New Adventures of Pinocchio, where I play Madame Flambeau, the witch who turns into the monster at the end, the same from the first film.

And I did this back to back, actually, with Shadow of the Vampire. And that was harder, because the production got delayed and I had to do two movies for three days at the same time, day and night, because they said otherwise I'm in trouble.

So I did The New Adventures of Pinocchio first and then—no, first Shadow of the Vampire, and then I did Pinocchio right away. And I had so much time there, I developed Broken Cookies in a restaurant, a pizzeria. When I make a movie I always go to the same restaurant, because you can do what you want, be who you are. They know you have makeup on, or your tie's slightly off and it's okay.

I developed a story. I came up with the idea. Just a fragment. I first had the ending, which I shot two days ago, where I fall into a swimming pool, and all that splashing about. I have red hair like she does. Because Lola has to have red hair. Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets!

Udo and Laura Belli get arty in *Season of the Senses.*

Where does it take place?
In Los Angeles.

Did you actually do the Madame Flambeau role in drag?
Oh, yeah. The dresses were made in London. I had the whole thing, the whole schmear underneath and a corset and silicone breasts, yeah. Not really injected, but I had them lying on top of it. So great, great, great costumes.

This is your first drag role, right?
No, I did another film. It's amazing that I get all that. My new career in drag.

You'll be touring the circuit soon.
I only do drag in a film that I think is interesting, but I also play other roles. Otherwise it's not interesting. I'm in drag in the film The Debtors, directed by Evi Quaid, with Randy Quaid and Michael Caine and Catherine McCormick.

I play a concierge. And then Michael Caine comes in, and he's fascinated by this German woman who is undercover. And then as a joke I go to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. And I have the same dress, the same hairstyle. And he is following me. He obviously takes me for her. It's an amazing film.

I don't know what's happening to the film.

I want to see Besat.
That's a good film. It's a Danish film. And actually Besat's cameraman, Eigil Bryld, is my cameraman for my movie.

Oh, so you brought him over.
Yeah, I was in a difficult position because I promised him. And then Christopher Doyle offered to do the camera, and he's one of the best cameramen. But I'm loyal to friends, so I took Eigel. And Christopher may be a little bit sad, because it was all announced.

It's fun to make a movie. And I have almost no professional actors in the parts to play. I have all my friends play. It's difficult. It's not difficult to direct people, but it's difficult because non-professional actors, they don't know that if they have to put the bottle there, and we do a closeup, the bottle has to be also there.

So I have to always be careful that everything moves around. And because I'm stopping now, I stop and I want to redo things. I mean, not on film, but on the script. Because that's good for a Dogme film,

Udo and Jessica Harper in Dario Argento's classic, *Suspiria*.

because you have the freedom, because it's a little camera and thirty minutes costs forty dollars. So you can do that. And let's see what's coming.

I don't know. If the film doesn't work, then I give all my actors a knife and blame them. It's their fault, and we take the knives and make a horror picture. If that doesn't work, I'll burn the film and make a film about burning a film. It's Dogme.

How many short films have you made?
One. I made one short film, eleven minutes long, called The Last Trip to Harrisburg, where I'm sitting in a train as an American soldier. That film was in competition with Lars von Trier, The Element of Crime at the festival in Mannheim.

That's when I met Lars, and I sold the film for him immediately.

You sold The Element of Crime for him?
Yeah, I called the company, and they said to me "Oh, you really think it's a good movie?" And then, of course, this company forgot that I did it, and then they bought all the films later on. They also had Zentropa, whose original title was Europa. There was some German director, a woman, Agniewszka Holland. She stole the title from us.

Yeah, Europa, Europa. They had to change it.
Because they both were in Cannes, and our film in Cannes was called Europa. So her film came up before Zentropa, and they called their film Europa, Europa. So we could not call it Europa, because when I said I did Europa, everybody said "Oh, yeah, I know that film. Europa, Europa." I said "no."

And so because my father in the story owns the company called Zentropa, that's why Lars used the title Zentropa, and it's also the name of his film company, Zentropa.

Didn't you also direct that commercial in Even Cowgirls Get the Blues? The tampon commercial, with Uma Thurman.
I said, "You are this big bird." Uma said, "I'm a woman; I'm not a bird." I said, "Whatever you are. You are a woman/bird, bird/woman, just let's do it." It's a nice scene.

Yeah, it is.
Unfortunately the film didn't do well.

But you were great.
Thank you, you're so kind. But I think of all the directors I've worked with, Lars von Trier is the only director who I would think could never make a bad movie. Because he's so talented. Fassbinder was good, but he made also some bad movies.

And it's amazing, like Fassbinder, for example, hated Lili Marleen, which was the most expensive movie he made. And he hated that because there was so much money involved. At that time, he shot it in 1980, it was the second most expensive German production after the war. The Tin Drum was the first, and then that. And directors don't like that because, which we all know, if you're an independent filmmaker, the moment you get a lot of money, more people control you. And they look over your

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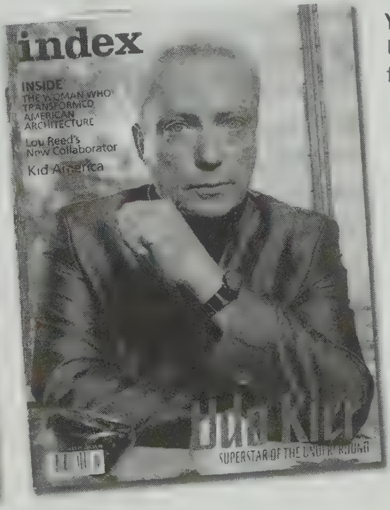

index
Inside
The Woman Who Transformed American Architecture
Lou Reed's New Collaborator
Kid America
Udo Kier
Superstar of the Underground

On the cover of *Video Watchdog Special Edition*, photographed by Greg Gorman, and *Index*, photographed by Richard Kern.

shoulder and say, “No, no, no, it’s too much money, we have to do it like this.”

But still, we shot it in English, and these same actors all redubbed into German, which I think is a mistake in Germany. Because if you want to have a successful movie, you should shoot it in English. Because where does a German film go? To some hidden people in Brazil? Or the Goethe Institut.

Did you enjoy working on Modern Vampires?
The strange thing was, when they offered me the film, I didn’t want to do it. And Richard Elfman said, “Since I saw Dracula, I have one wish—to put a stake through your heart.”

I said, “Okay, but then find somebody very important to do that.” So he got Rod Steiger to do it. That was a kick for me. That was a kick.

But there is something about that film that doesn’t work, you know. But you never can analyze why films don’t work. It’s maybe the wrong moment, the audience is not ready. You never know. Maybe it’s too cold, maybe it’s too hot outside. You never know why a film doesn’t work.

I like the girl. She’s amazing looking, the daughter of Natalie Wood. She’s a beauty. And Casper Van Dien is so photogenic, it’s amazing.

Where is he now? He did Starship Troopers, and then everything else has been these low-budget things, except for Sleepy Hollow.
He did also a film which I haven’t seen about the life story of James Dean, I guess. It’s amazing, every young actor in America who is blond, they all want to do James Dean.

It’s funny, because on the DVD commentary on Modern Vampires, Richard Elfman and Casper Van Dien spend the whole time talking about James Dean.
And we do now. You see, we didn’t know that.

You also wrote a little segment in My Own Private Idaho.
I didn’t write it. When I met Gus in Berlin at the festival, he offered me the part. First of all, all directors always talk about making movies. Because they get frustrated after three days at a festival, maybe they offer somebody a part.

We wrote each other letters, and then he wrote me and said, “I found the money. I’m going to do the film.” And by that time, nobody in Germany knew Keanu Reeves or River Phoenix. I didn’t know them. And he says they’re teenage idols. And I was thinking about the role, and I said “Well, for the first American film, playing a role like that; I hope it works out.”

And then I found a little suitcase in a flea market, a beautiful little suitcase. And I wrote him a letter and I said, “Hans should have a suitcase.” You know, actors always talk about their role. They never say “me”. They always say, “Hans should have a suitcase. A little one. I found one.”

He said okay. And I said, “I want to put things in the suitcase which nobody ever sees, the camera never sees.” So I put a picture of my mother in a frame, because there’s a closeup in the film. And one day—

Udo taking wood in Paul Morrisey’s *Blood for Dracula*, and [this page] as the good doctor in *Flesh for Frankenstein*.

So that's really your mom in that.
Yeah, and then we're shooting the film. I said to Gus, "You know, I was in Moscow performing, and one night the speakers were playing the music anyway, but they forgot to give me the microphone. And I was standing there in Olympic Stadium, I had no microphone. So I had a flashlight, and I made it right away into a microphone. I was singing into the flashlight."

And he said, "That's a great idea, but you cannot use that." He said, "Give me the tape. Let me hear the tape." So we're supposed to shoot that scene the next day, and the next day he came in the morning and said, "I have an idea. Why don't you sing to the boys?"

I said, "What do you mean? Tell them I sing?" He said, "Yeah, sing." And he said, "You cannot use the flashlight, because everyone will think of Blue Velvet."

So then we went to the set, and there was this hideous hotel lamp. And he said, "Why don't you take that one?" I said, "You must be joking. You want me to sing with that?" And then he said, "Yeah."

But then it came like that. And we made the scene. Plus my own music. I wrote the music. There are two pieces. I have another piece in My Own Private Idaho, which is much better, called Mr. Klein. It was played when I try to pick up River and put him in my car, but you can hardly hear it. And that's how that came along.

I think every director has a different way. For example, with Lars von Trier, at the beginning you were not allowed to improvise at all. And Gus likes when people improvise. Now with Lars, when I did Dancer in the Dark, it was the same. He improvised. And when Björk was sitting opposite me, I play the eye doctor, because she gets blind in the film. And we start doing our takes and Lars said, "I don't like it." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Just talk. Talk and improvise."

So we improvised, and the camera was running, and we came of course to our text. And he said, "Oh, fuck! This is the longest take in the film, a thirty-minute take."

So, of course, then he did the camera himself, so he goes there and there and there. So, like The Kingdom, you can cut in the action, which is a great idea. He invents. Lars von Trier is such a genius director, because he invents so many things, technically, in every film.

Medea is one of my favorite films, because I play the main part, of course. That's why it's my favorite film.

It was a great film. It was my first work with Lars von Trier. And it was very funny, because when we did the first scene where all the kings are standing, and I did my acting, he said "Stop!" in the middle of the thing.

And I said, "What?" And he said, "Oh, I forgot we have a star." I said, "What do you mean?" He said: "I gave you a horse. I gave you two dogs. You want to play against the horse. Just be a tired king and don't act."

It is easy for directors to say to an actor: "Don't act." That's the most difficult thing, not to act. Because especially, I made I think—the internet knows more about me than I do—I think I made over 100 films, that's what it says anyway. Maybe that's with the titles in different languages; I don't know.

It's very difficult not to act. Other people say, I like when directors say 'be yourself'. You're there thinking, How am I? They want me to be like they see me, or—? You don't know.

What was your first American role?
I did a film called Salzburg Connection with Barry Newman. They changed it in America to Top Secret. It was the first time they used me as a killer. Each time I come, I kill somebody, and it was an entirely new thing for me.

Then came Dracula and Frankenstein. And my first film made in America was My Own Private Idaho. That made me stay in America. I was living with a girlfriend and I had already packed my suitcase to go back to Germany, and there was a dinner for me. And she said, "Why don't you stay? Try to work at it." I said, "No, no, it's too hard here." And of course after a few glasses of red wine I said, "Yeah, why not?"

So I got myself a little apartment, a little traditional Volkswagen, a little buggy in red. Then came my first film in New York, For Love or Money with Michael J. Fox, directed by Barry Sonnenfeld. And then came Ace

Udo performing Mr. Klein in Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho.*

Ventura: Pet Detective, and then it went on and on and on.

So did Gus approach you or did you approach Gus?
No, Gus approached me. I've never approached a director in my whole life.

You've been in a lot of films lately, a lot of big-budget, Hollywood high-profile movies. Do you have an agent?
I have two managers; I don't believe in agents. I have two managers because the agents, they all do the same thing. You meet them and they show you the conference room and they'll say, "Why didn't you come here before? Why did you wait so long?" And then they're really trying for two weeks, and then they see it's not that easy. They don't tell you that, but because they know that you're ambitious, you want to go, and then in two weeks...

So I have not had an agent for three years now. I have managers, and they're very strong. A manager can be stronger than an agent, because the manager is working for you. While an agent has so many actors and they don't want to get on bad terms with the producer or with the directors. But a manager is working for you. They can say, "We want that, we want that, we want that or"—you know.

When did you first realize you were making an impact in America? Now that you're doing the car commercials, too, obviously someone is realizing that the American public enjoys your presence.
I just did a beautiful commercial. I did a commercial with Andre Agassi for Canon. I haven't seen the completed version, but I play the judge with all these tattoos and I say: "Three, two, one, go, Agassi!" I like commercials.

So many people who do horror films say over and over again that they want to do a romance film or a comedy. Would you like to be some love interest sitting by some snow-covered mountain, staring out at the sky?
Blond hair, cold, having a drink.

When I did Dracula, which was my first horror film, I got offers from London, a lot for horror, but I didn't want to be the second Christopher Lee. Because, you see, it's the same with Sean Connery. It took him so long to get over that James Bond image, even though he was, for me, the best James Bond ever, forget all the rest.

When I did the film Doomsdayer with Brigitte Nielsen, she was amazing. She's still amazing. In every role she does you see that. We did that film in Manila. It was my dream

role. The perfect James Bond villain, but in the wrong movie, maybe. You'd never know.

And I have an island. Of course, the typical thing, I create a bomb, and I want to destroy the world. Typical thing. And I have a beautiful wife.

It would be smart to hire you for a James Bond movie, I think.
That's what everybody says. So let's do it.

Time to get on the web and let the Broccolis know.
I just made my own video introduction for my website. It's going to be the most amazing website ever seen. I sit there and have a tuxedo on as a vampire. Totally white makeup and all that. And I put a piece of glass in front of the camera and I have the teeth and I say: "Good evening!" Like that. "And welcome to my first official website."

And then for a little cookie, I bought a little rat, a plastic rat, took the head, filled it with blood and closed it. And then I reach out and I take it, and I had to rub it around in one hand, because it's a plastic rat, so it looks alive. But you call tell it's plastic; I like that. Then I bite the head off, and all the blood gushes out and I drink it all. Like there was the famous scene in Dracula, which was not cut. And I had the idea, when Paul Morrissey told me to vomit after biting the virgins, which were not virgins.

And I vomit, and I had two glasses of blood prepared. And the camera was there, so there was no cut. So I go like that, and I have all this blood coming out without a cut. I like blood!

Is the website udokier.com?
No, somebody bought that. A fan. I could get it back. I should have reserved it earlier but I thought nobody would buy it. And it was ridiculous, because when I called they said, "No, it's taken." I said, "No! Who bought it?" And it was a fan. I'm not a technician. I now have reserved www.udo-kier.com. So I have that. I wanted to call

it udokier1. I'm going to register udokier2, every version. I'm going to register it now.

I'm inspired by a new film idea, because this film will be made by people from the internet. I had an idea, which I'm going to do now, that everybody in my movie, my own movie, can buy a screen credit. So for $500, you get a single credit; for $250, you have to share it. For $100, five people.

I think it's good. I'm going to make the first movie financed by the internet, by people. And then it says in the credits: Eric King of Philadelphia. Nobody's done this.

You're selling screen credits. That's wonderful. Are you going to broadcast this movie on your site, then?
Lars von Trier, they're having their own broadcast. They created that. And they want me to do kind of a talk show, broadcast all the time. I don't know.

I didn't see the one that he did, the New Year's movie. D-Day.
Neither have I. They did it, and I don't know where they got the idea from, because I told them months ago that I was starting my own movie at New Year's Eve.

And they showed four screens at the same time. Didn't they make their movies live, or they made—?
I think they made it, and they broadcast it the next day.

Yeah, exactly, on four screens. Didn't Zentropa just produce a porno film?
Zentropa made their first porno. They just made it. It's not Dogme. The company is called Innocent Pictures. It's difficult to make a porno with Dogme, but they are very intelligent people in Denmark. They have their own studios now. They bought an old military base, and they made the studios there. So they have their own studios now, and a lot of people working for them.

And they're producing movies, because a lot of people want to do Dogme films, and I was fighting right in the beginning for seven because seven is a magic number. So I wanted always to have seven. And I personally think after ten, it's going to be difficult. Who cares about Dogme eleven? Or twenty five? Nobody. Or 110? Nobody. Ten is good.

So that's why the film you're directing later this year is called The Six Teeth?
I'll tell you how that idea came to me. I went to the Vienna festival not a long time ago, and I had tooth problems. I went to the doctor, and I was amazed. They did an X-ray, and it was like a panorama. That's going to be on the poster.

And you could see that I have six false teeth. So I thought, Oh, that's great. This kind of alien look, and all my posters are going to be red. I think red is the best color for a poster, with black. And so I have these teeth in the poster, tilting. And it says The Devil Has Six False Teeth.

So I had first the title for the story. Now I have the story. I play a vampire surgeon in Palm Springs. The film starts with two women with little poodles. They're sitting there, and they see a newspaper ad that says, "Why don't you have your facelift at night? Nobody will see you."

And they say, "Oh, that's a good idea, so all our friends don't know what we're doing." So they go to Palm Springs, where I have my clinic. And I have to operate at. And I turn them all into monsters.

They take all the bandages off, and they're all like monsters. So they cannot go back to L.A. They have to stay with me in the desert. So I have all tents in the garden, all with these monsters. There you have it.

You didn't want to give yourself another false tooth just to get that magic number going?
That would be great, 7/7, rather than six.

The next one's going to be on film? Or are you going to do digital video again?
I'm doing, like Jean-Marc Barr, he made Dogme #5, Lovers. He made another film with Rosanna Arquette, Too Much Flesh.

I'm going to use this camera, but I'm going to use lights, because I found out it's ridiculous without lights. And I want to also do the music afterwards, what everybody does, to see the picture and then find the music that goes with it.

Udo Kier in Montreal, 2004. Photo Shade Rupe.

And I have Nina Hagen in the film, of course. And the thing is, I'm going to use the digital camera, but lights and all that. Because it's expensive to shoot. With a Dogme film, you have to play by the manifesto's rules.

And this is another completed script that you have?
It's in my brain, yeah.

Will it be a feature?
Yeah. I develop it in my brain, then I write the script in three days. I have to develop step by step. That's what's happened with Broken Cookies. I had the idea, I came up with the ending, and it came up. Then you bring it in a form. I realize now, after I shot the last scene two days ago, that ultimately, when you make a film, even if you have a script, there are so many things that happen all of a sudden on the set, which then changes your movie.

And you only can do that with a Dogme film. When you do not have five producers behind you saying, "Wait a minute. That's not in the script." So you're more flexible about it.

You and Fassbinder were friends.
I made five films with him. I made The Stationmaster's Wife. I play a hairdresser. I was in Lili Marleen, helping the Jewish people to escape. I did Berlin Alexanderplatz, I did Lola with Barbara Sukowa. And I did The Third Generation with Barbara Sukova, one of my favorite films, about terrorism in Germany.

I knew Fassbinder when he was sixteen and I was seventeen. We met in a working-class bar in Germany, in Cologne. I didn't know that he would be a filmmaker. And one day when I was living in London, I bought the magazine Stern, and I opened it up, and there was his face, and two pages saying "The Genius and the Alcoholic". And I said, I know him!

When you know people from a bar, you don't know their family name, their full name. So I met him again and then he offered me a film, Fox and His Friends. And I refused. And he wanted me in a movie, and he never forgave me for that. But I didn't like the story. It was too personal. And then I did my first film with him, which was The Stationmaster's Wife.

The only version of Lili Marleen I have—
You know these movies? But you're so young!

I remember when The Stationmaster's Wife came out. I started seeing movies really young. But Lili Marleen is only available here with Japanese subtitles, and it's in German. So all you can do is look at the pictures.
It's beautiful. I like Japanese subtitles. They're the best. They go on the side and in red. They're their own art form.

The same thing with Dr. Jekyll and the Women. It's dubbed.
It's dubbed for us also. Lili Marleen was shot in English, and the same artists, Hanna Schygulla and myself, we all dubbed ourselves into German. But it was shot in English.

It's so sad that we don't have that. We only have a German-dubbed version with Japanese subtitles. I like how Anchor Bay released Nosferatu. Both an English and a German version on one disc.
Yeah. Herzog called. He wants me to do a movie with him. He's doing his first big American movie with Tim Robbins. He's going to play Hanussen, the psychic guy. It's a great script. It's about just before the Nazis came into power.

Istvan Szabo already made Hanussen. So another Hanussen film?
Yeah, I'm sure better. And he's doing it for an American. Not a big American production, but a great story. He wrote it, and he offered me a part. The part is not big enough for me, so I told him either to extend that part or write another part.

He's great. I admire him. He's a great filmmaker. He did really great films. I mean, with Klaus Kinski, all the films are amazing.

Are there directors that you are actually pursuing, or really wanting to be in their films?
Never.

You had mentioned David Lynch.
I would like to be, but I never—

You wouldn't go to him and—?
I hope when I talk about wanting to be in his films, if somebody writes about it and he reads it and then he takes me, that would be great. I would never go to him and say, "I want to be in your movie."

There are a lot of actors in Hollywood, young actors, who do that all the time, and they never work. A director wants to discover you for themselves, so they'll say, "Okay, that person would be great for that part." But if I call them and say, "I want to be in your movie," he would say no.

How about the converse of that? Have you had people send you scripts?
Every week. I get so many scripts every week. And I read them, most of them. And of course, it's egoistic, I look at the first page, to see if my character's name is there. In the middle, if it's still at the end, if it's there, then I'm going read it.

A lot of people, especially from Germany, they'll send me scripts because they want to use my name to get financing. And then they ask you for a letter of intent and all that. And they say, "Well, it's not anybody. We can only see you in that role." And if you read it and you think that anybody can play it, what's the point of playing it?

Are you more of a household name in Germany?
I like that word. "Household."

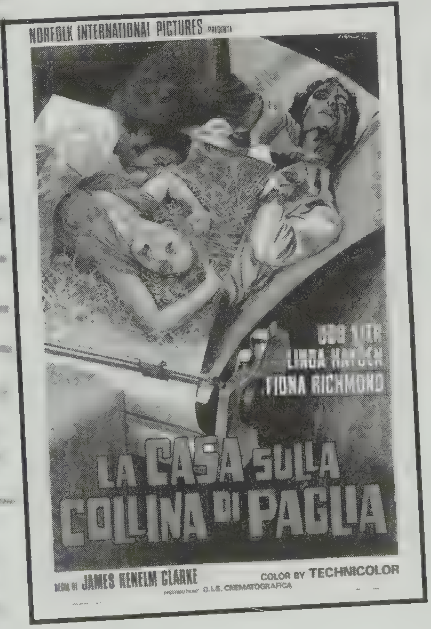
Yeah, like Wonder Bread.
Yeah, I'm bankable, yeah. There are only three actors in Germany who work in America. There's Armin Mueller-Stahl, Jürgen Prochnow, and me. There are no other German actors.

Til Schweiger has started doing some work.
Well, it didn't work, did it? He's a great producer now, and director, and directs his own movie. Germany. He's number one of the new generation.

A lot of people, they think it's easy in America. They call me and say, "Oh yeah, I'm coming over. Can you introduce me to some people?" I say, "Yeah, I'll call Steven Spielberg for the first appointment for you, and then let's see where we're going."

I always say, if any foreign actor would know how difficult it is to read one line next to Arnold Schwarzenegger or Bruce Willis, they would buy a gun and shoot themselves, because they would never work.

Do you have any ideas in your head for some hundred-million-dollar, totally over-the-top, Hollywood sort of movie?
To be in one?


NORFOLK INTERNATIONAL PICTURES presenta
UDO KIER
LINDA HAYDEN
FIONA RICHMOND
LA CASA SULLA COLLINA DI PAGLIA
REGIA DI JAMES KENELM CLARKE
COLOR BY TECHNICOLOR
D.L.S. CINEMATOGRAFICA

Italian poster for *The House on Straw Hill.*

To make one.
Nooo...

No, you wouldn't even touch something like that?
As an actor, I was in End of Days. That was $100 million. No, no, no, no. I came to America, I did not dream about a swimming pool and having tea with Joan Collins and have a trainer like Arnold Schwarzenegger. I did not dream of this.

I have a beautiful house and two beautiful dogs and some beautiful friends. I live a very normal life. I go to the hardware store like anybody else and buy tape and cords.

I think an actor will lose reality, like a lot of them, especially young actors now. The big ones like that. They don't know that they lose reality, because they have so many people working for them, that they don't do anything.

And I study mostly by seeing people, in the street, in situations, and if I like that, then I'll adopt it for myself. And I'll put it in a film, in a role. That's important. You have to live in reality.

Everyone loves the reality you created with Madonna.

I did the Sex book with her. And two videos. I don't know her. I've had my head everywhere on her body, but I don't know her.

People said to me, my intellectual friends in Europe said, "How can you do that book?" I said, "You know how many millions of men in the whole world would be jealous of what I do?" That's a weighty provocation to do it.

I know you love Dracula. What other favorite films come to your head? What other things do you love to see?

Another favorite film is a Hungarian film, Nárcisz és Psyché, where I play a poet. We had one year of shooting because the director wanted the four seasons. So we had, for example, my grave. You see it. They place the camera on my grave, and you really see the flowers coming, blooming, and the snow coming. They shot some amazing film.

It's about two poets. From 1800 to 1920. It's a psychological thriller. It's a great movie. The director unfortunately killed himself at thirty-six.

Fassbinder was thirty-six. He died in 82.

And he made forty-two films. With all those credits. Like Alexanderplatz was a pile of scripts this wide, and he wrote them all. Based on [Alfred] Döblin's book. He was great. In Germany now, I don't think there is anyone like him. A lot of people, when Fassbinder died, are trying to get his position, but they haven't.

It's all the old people now. It's like Herzog, and Wim Wenders. I did End of Violence with him. Not that they're all old, but I'm talking about a new generation of filmmaking. There isn't one.

Just because you're young doesn't mean you're part of the new generation of filmmakers.

That's true. You need talent.

I thought Julie Taymor did a great job with Titus.

I saw it. It looked good. I was up for a commercial with Mr. Hopkins for Honda, and I choose to come here to New York instead. So the Americans lost it. Because they wanted to see me on Friday.

I'm curious about this whole thing with Antonio Margheriti taking credit for the two Morrissey films you did.

The thing is, Andy Warhol had nothing to do with the movie. Antonio Margheriti had nothing to do with the movie. Paul cast so many foreigners. The girls—one was French, two Italian, and one was Czechoslovakian, I and my assistant were German.

So to be financed by the government, you need a majority of six of the same nationality. So they said, "Okay, you can make the movie." But we have to have on paper a director with an Italian name. He has so many names. Antonio Margheriti, Anthony Dawson. It's very confusing.

He's like Jess Franco. He has a hundred names. He wants to do a movie with me.

Jess? Oh, that's wonderful.

Yeah, he wants to do a movie, I have the script. What is it? Dr. Orlof.

The remake of it?

He's making a remake of his own film.

A remake of a remake of a remake.

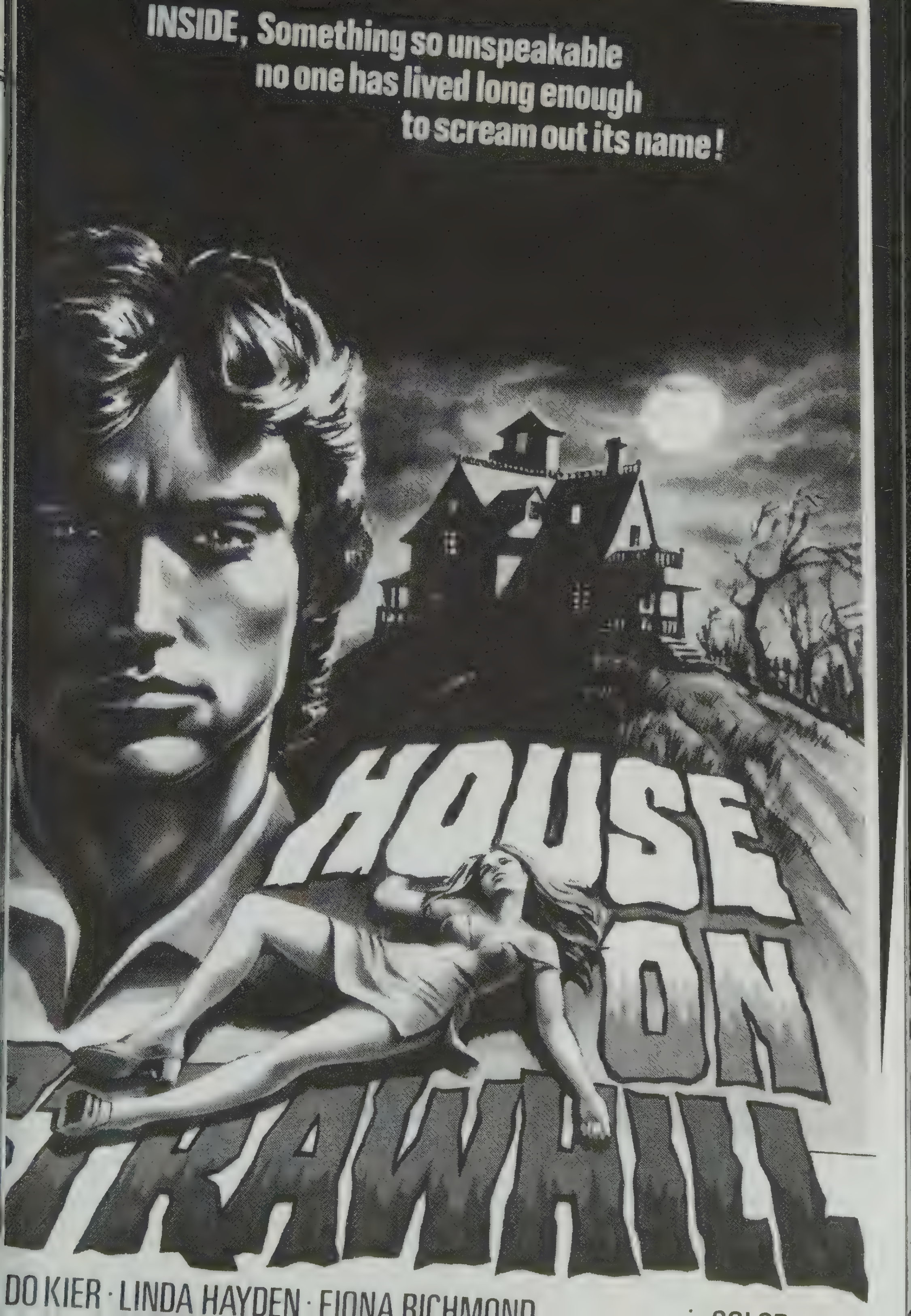
No, a remake of his own film.

Oh, I know, but he's remade that one since, so it's a remake of a remake. He had like three different remakes.

With the same name? Isn't that great?

Are you thinking about doing it?

Well, if they come up with the money to get me for the film. A lot of people, they approach actors in the early stage and they say, "Okay, do you want to do it?" And I say yes. Then they go around saying, "We have

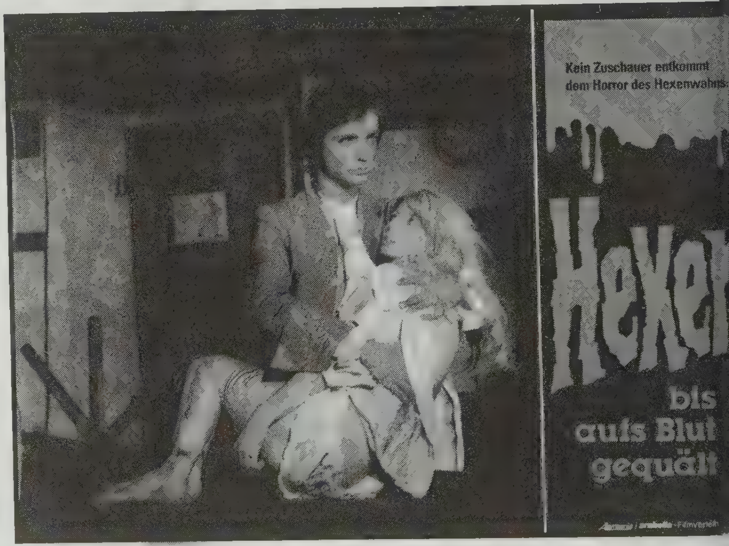

INSIDE, Something so unspeakable
no one has lived long enough
to scream out its name!
HOUSE
ON
TRAWHILL
DO KIER · LINDA HAYDEN · FIONA RICHMOND
in COLOR

Udo Kier playing the lead. We need some money." That's how they do it.

Are there any historical figures you'd love to represent in a film?

Well, yeah. Historical figures, the older you get as an actor, it changes. When I was young, I wanted to play Rimbaud, which was played by Leonardo DiCaprio. So that's out. And then I wanted to play Gilles de Rais for Borowczyk. And they never made that film.

Gilles de Rais is the most amazing figure. He was married and killed all these young children, and he was into black magic. The great thing was, Borowczyk wanted to make an episode or episodes. And that episode was that period when he had the trial, Gilles de Rais. And while somebody was talking, all the judges were not allowed to go to the toilet. So he was talking for twelve hours or something, with them all pissing and shitting in their pants. That would be a great film to make.


Kein Zuschauer entkommt dem Horror des Hexenwahns
Hexe
bis aufs Blut gequält

Because at that time you were not allowed to leave the courtroom, while somebody was talking. And he was talking, I think, for twelve hours, explaining that he actually, out of medical reasons, was opening the children up to see inside them. At that time nobody had seen inside with X-rays, things like that.

What was it like working with Howard Vernon?

It was good. It was very interesting. I like to work with historical actors who have done so much.

Yeah, he had an incredible career.

When did he die? He died a few years ago?

Four years ago. July, 1996.

You know some actors feel that they need to get into "mode". Is there something that you're doing, when you're creating a role? When you're performing a role, do you feel that you're working something out or you're projecting something?

Of course. For me it's more difficult than for other actors, because I've never been to acting school. And I became a professor of teaching acting. And because I created my own style. So I have to live things through. I cannot go back and say, "Well, teacher, tell me how to do that."

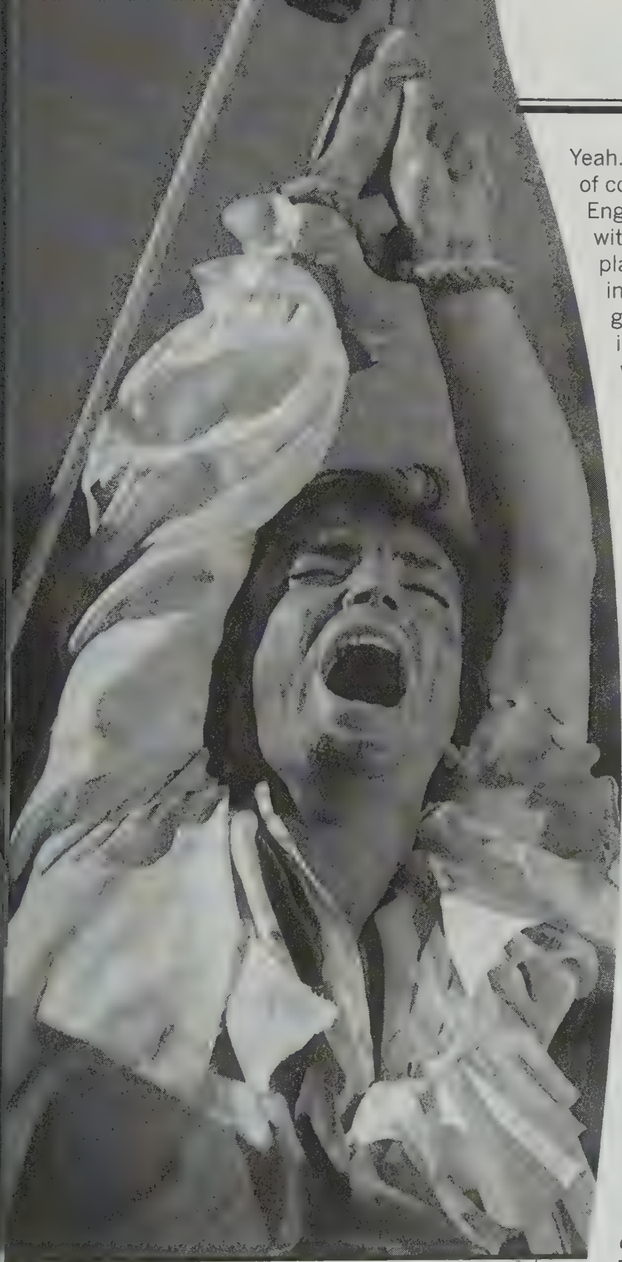
So I have to really live it through, which is very tiring, making movies like that. But it's better. For me it's better, because of course when I read a script—for example, that's why Frankenstein was so funny, because immediately I said, "I need a doctor. I need all the Latin words."

I had such a short time to prepare, that's why I was talking about the gall bladder. I didn't even know what I was saying. It was all like, that's it. Actors, you have to prepare yourself, of course. And you have to come up with your own ideas, always.

And not just holding a cigarette, because that's very easy. Through other action. It's always the little things that you remember. Even Marlon Brando, it's the very tiny things which you remember mostly. Never the big, big, big things.

Like in the film, Don Juan de Marco, with Marlon Brando and Johnny Depp. The only thing I remember about that film is when

UDO KIER



Marlon Brando goes to his grandmother to interview her, and she has this thing full of flies. And the flies go around. All of a sudden, in the middle of conversation, pop! on the table. This I remember. Because that was such a little thing. I'm sure the actors came up with it. Because it's organic.

Have you done any stage work?

Yeah. My first play was a play which, of course, was a scandal. It was from England; it was called The Beard, with Jean Harlow and Billy the Kid. I played Billy the Kid. Michael McClure in America wrote it. And the actors got arrested in England all the time in the evening, because it was so vulgar, the text. But that's what provoked me. So I did it in German. I don't like to do stage work for the simple reason, when you do that you need stage training. Then you realize, that film—because when I made the first film, Salzburg Connection with Klaus Maria Brandauer, it was his first film, and he was so bad. He's great onstage, but nobody—Preminger, nobody—told him, in a closeup like that... Sometimes in a closeup, when it's very close, I calculate numbers. I go away from the story, and I look at the person, and I'm saying "1,250 plus 5,700 is—?" in my head because it's so close. It's like your soul is presented. Look how big you are on the screen.

So you're doing these numbers to distance yourself?

Yeah, to get away from it. Because maybe the story will be dramatic. With that kind of film, Dracula or something, cannot be dramatic enough. But for modern films, yeah.

In The Kingdom, how many hours each day did you have to stay in the contraption?

Eight hours.

Ouch.

The Kingdom and The Kingdom II were my most difficult roles. The second, Kingdom II, was the most difficult role that I ever played. Because first of all, I gave my head to a false body all the time. Small like that or big like that. I was very big. I wasn't even in the room.

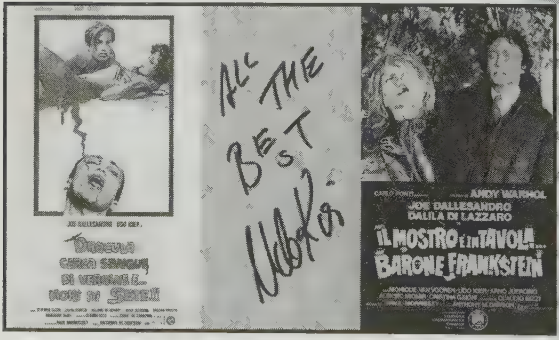
Both images: *Mark of the Devil.*

They made a hole just for my head. And it's very hard to do these positions, because they had always to strap my hand down, when I was lying in bed, always on my leg. Because if I lift up—oops! there's the hand. So I wasn't out of the bed. And then I had to cry for three weeks.

Lars would have never allowed me to use eye drops or anything like that. He would have said, "Can you not do that?" Which is hard, when you just have to think about the poor people in the world, and how happy we are that we have something to eat and they're not. You have to find yourself some stories. I would just think about cookies for the world.

If the body went that way, I had to go that way. It was very difficult. I had to learn. I always looked at it without me. And I had to correspond it to the body. Because if the body goes that way, I couldn't have it going that way.

So you worked closely with the puppeteers, you moved the arms and things like that?
Yeah. We rehearsed. And that was very, very difficult.


Dracula cerca sangue di vergine e... morì di sete!!
All THE BEST
Udo Kier
CARLO PONTI
ANDY WARHOL
JOE DALLESANDRO
DALILA DI LAZZARO
IL MOSTRO È IN TAVOLA... BARONE FRANKSTEIN

CD insert for *Andy Warhol's Dracula* and *Frankenstein*.

What was it like being born again?
That was the most scary experience I had. Because they built this enormous hole of the woman, and Lars said, "We can only do it once." And I had to be on a piece of wood with rollers, and I had to lie on my back. It was a horrible feeling.

All of a sudden I heard in the far distance: "Push yourself through." So I had to push really hard, and I pushed myself and it didn't work. I thought, My God, now it has to work. I pushed myself through and it didn't work, and I had to scream.

It was very difficult. I didn't sleep for two days. Because it's dark. I was really in the stomach of the woman. It was really dark. And she was very big.

Your directing, how has that affected you as an actor? Has there been any kind of change?
I think I'm a good director. I prefer to work with non-actors, because I don't like it when an actor comes to me and says, "Well, I have an idea. What do you think about—?" That's why I work with non-actors.

So I let them work on their own, I give them a story. If they tell me the story back, and I believe them, then they're good actors. I just have to believe it.

Okay, it's like Paul Morrissey. There's a lot of directors in the world, especially in American pictures, who actually, the moment they cast, that does mean they want you personally. That's why they cast you.

And then you offer them what to do. I hate to work also with actors who come up with a hundred thousand ideas, and it's all for themselves. All of a sudden they say, "You know, I should have the last word." I say, "Yeah, yeah, because you're on camera longer, great."

When I had to sleep with another actor, and he says to me, "I'll wake up first." I said, "Yeah, so you'll be on camera longer, right? No, no, we'll wake up together." It's like there's so many tricks, because it's visual. So you can use so many tricks. Actors are using tricks all the time.

It's interesting to hear an actor talk about the narcissism of other actors. You sound like you're very internal.
It's like a figure. You have a figure, and one figure moves and the other, and you're just trying to be the figure they ask you to be. And you make sure that you move in that direction. That's why you have a director. Make sure you hit the mark, under the light, that kind of thing.

If these films you're making get a lot of attention, and people start discussing Udo

Kier the director, do you think you might start moving more towards directing?
I don't know, but I don't think so. I realize now how difficult it is. That's why I say, if it doesn't work, I give all my actors a knife and tell them to make a horror movie and kill themselves.

So when did you know you were going to become an actor?
That's in my film also. That's in Broken Cookies.

Because I have cast real wheelchair people. Real transsexuals and transvestites in the wheelchairs. I found them in the street. They're my stars. And I'm also in a wheelchair, I don't talk in a meeting. I'm running a flat car outside on some wheels. One girl, Radica Jovicic, she's also in the movie.

I gave them all stories about why they're in a wheelchair. Because I don't want to know the real story, because they all have the same story. So I give them stories why. And my story I tell when I go to the psychiatrist, because in life I've never been to a psychiatrist and never will.

So I'm doing my whole life story, my own personal life story in front of the camera with a psychiatrist. And I lie on the couch and I tell the story.

This is a true story, which is actually in Epidemic, where Lars von Trier tells the same story, because Lars was intrigued by the story.

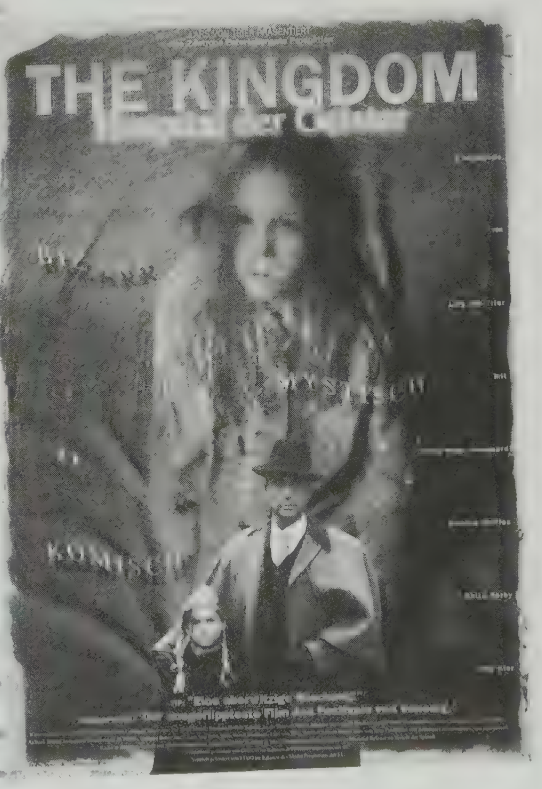
I was born on the 14th of October 1944. My mother was taken to the hospital. Just before that one bridge collapsed, with all the people falling in the cars.

The driver said, "Don't go, young lady, they've just taken out the bridge." So I was born in the hospital, and my mother was alone. I was born without a father, because he was engaged to my mother and didn't tell my mother in the war that he had already three children and that he was already married.

And in the evening, my mother said that a nurse was collecting all the babies. My mother said, "Could I have him for a few moments more?" And then mother told me that she saw the wall coming down. And then my mother saw through the glass window that the wall to the nursery came down, and the nurse was trying to protect all the babies, and jumped over the wall and ran off.

And my mother said the hospital was all flat, and everybody was dead. My mother was fortunate, because her bed was standing in the corner, so she was protected more. And then, I don't know how many hours, I didn't want to ask the details because my mother, it was very hurtful for her.

She had me in one arm. With the other arm, she made a hole in the wall and waved and waved. And it must have been an amazing picture, just seeing this hand waving. And then the Americans obviously saved my life and pulled me out, and that was the first day I was born.



German poster for Lars von Trier's *The Kingdom*.

That sounds very romantic. Who would you most like to have a romantic scene with in a film?
Hmmm... Schwarzenegger!

EL TOPO

BAKUNIN

"I wanted to be the Cecil B. DeMille of the happening."

Alejandro Jodorowsky in his home, Paris, 2004. Photo Shade Rupe.

di
ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

I HAD HEARD ALEJANDRO had arrived for his invited spot as Guest of Honor at the 2000 Chicago Underground Film Festival and when I walked down the stairs at the Pipers Alley theater after a preview screening of Cecil B. Demented, I *felt* Alejandro next to me. That was a life-changing week spent with the grand Chilean, now Parisian, traipsing all over Chicago as a festival judge and official host, and having my only full Tarot card reading, which included commands like 'paint your beard gold and rape your mother.' Words to live by!

Alejandro Jodorowsky hails from Chile and made an artistic nuisance of himself in Mexico with his Panic productions. Although globally known for his film work, El Topo did not premiere until the director was in his forties. His theater and musical work remains largely unknown though El Topo, Holy Mountain, and Santa Sangre forge his place in world cinema. During my week spent as a judge for CUFF 2000, Alejandro set aside an hour outside of my birthday-day Tarot reading for a videotaped interview.

SHADE RUPE: What you were doing before you created the Panic group with Roland Topor and Fernando Arrabal?
ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY: When I was a mime, I made a 16mm film, La Cravate. Cocteau liked the picture. But the picture got lost. It was based on a story by Thomas Mann. A woman took the head of her lover and the head of her husband and changed the heads on their bodies. That is the story.

What did Cocteau have to do with that?
We just showed him the film. And he liked it. And then he introduced it to people because I admired his movies.

When did you meet Roland Topor and Fernando Arrabal? Did you already have the idea in mind for a Panic theater, a Happening theater and you met them? Or were you friends with them and then it grew out of that friendship?

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

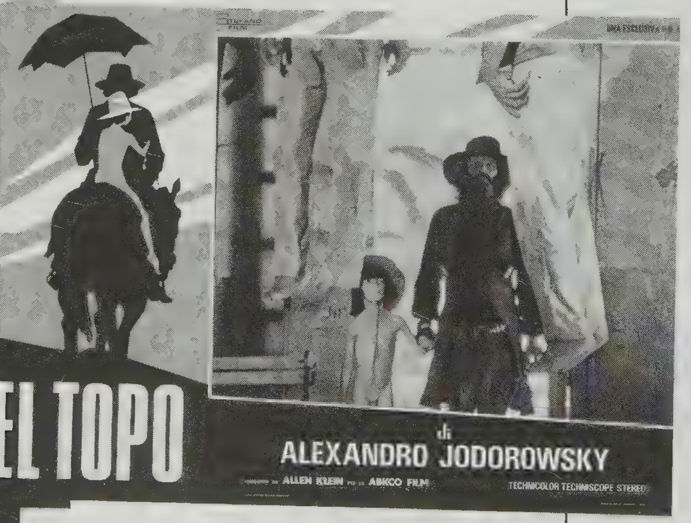
Previous page: Alejandro Jodorowsky and Fernando Arrabal *au naturel*. This page: 1960s Panic Happening.

Well I knew Arrabal, I was making theater and happenings and I directed a play of his, Fando y Lis. I knew him as a writer and Topor was a friend of Arrabal. I brought them to the Surrealism group of André Breton which I had been involved in. And we got bored with the Surrealism group of Breton and then we did the Panic group.

You knew André Breton?
I was in his surrealist group for three years. Arrabal and Topor joined me for a while.

And then you broke out and formed Panic.
Yes, yes.

And I've seen it written sometimes as Productions Panicus. Or just Panic. Is there an official name that you would use?
We decided to use the name Panic for everything we did.



What was Panic's first production?
It was 'the happening' we made in Paris, the big four-hour happening at the 2e Festival de la Libre Expression in 1965. It was enormous. The first part was a drawing, a big drawing of Topor, the initiation of a young girl to the feminine thing, like the first time he brings sleep or the first time he put knives, or the first time he put heels. It was a ceremony. And then there was a one-act theater play of Arrabal's, a little one. But they said they would act in the happening. And at the last moment, they were afraid, they didn't act. It was a happening, it was improvisation, I did everything.

So this was Arrabal and Topor who didn't want to perform.
They didn't want to perform.

So did they eventually begin performing in the happenings? Or did they always stay outside?
No, later, when at the happening, they saw what I did, it had an enormous, enormous impact. They were saying, "forgive us, because we had no faith." And from this moment, they started to act in the work. Because the Panic artist needs to be the actor of his work, that was the law of Panic. You make the work and then you need to be inside it.

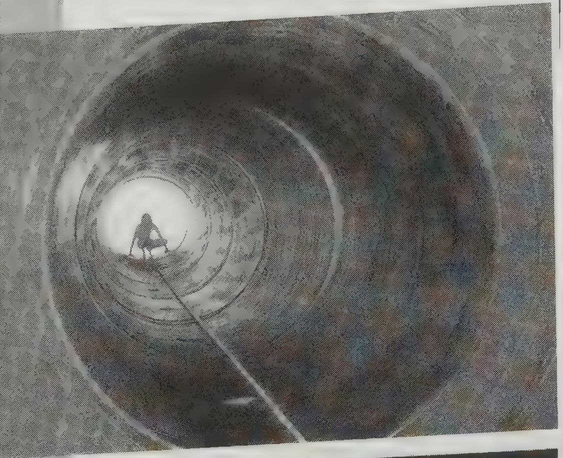
Was it something where you were on a stage and people would come watch?
Yes, it was a performance at the theater at the American Center, Paris. And then I took out everything that was in the theater, I cleaned up and I put from the stage to the public, I set up stairs from the audience to the stage. And I completely communicated with the audience. Every object I used, I threw to the public. I knew this was something of big value.

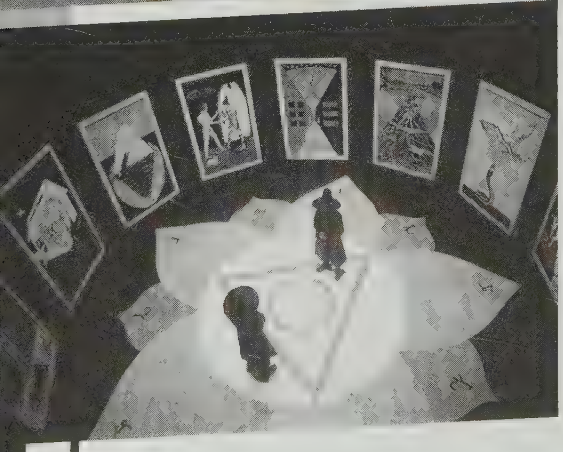
Before this, I wrote for Marceau, a pantomime called Mask Maker, which was for him a huge success. But in the beginning, he didn't want to pay me for my work. I had my copyright and we started a lawsuit. I won after four years. I won my rights to my work. It was an enormous amount of money. I was rich. And then I spent all this money on the happening.

I wanted to be the Cecil B. DeMille of the happening. And there was a French guy there that night, Jean Jacques Lebel. This Lebel... I didn't know criminals before him. I learned, from Lebel, that criminals exist in the arts.

The Holy Mountain

Alan Klein is a criminal, because he tried to kill El Topo and The Sacred Mountain. He had Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moormon, a lot of artists with him. I said, "I will go with you, but I will not make a little scene. I will make an enormous scene. I will be the Cecil B. DeMille of the happening." He laughed. He didn't believe. But when he saw what I did, it was so enormous he became completely jealous and tried to erase my happening. Not to speak about it. Not to say anything to the press. He tried to destroy the pictures that were taken. It was impossible, because there are pieces of that that went out in the papers. There are newspapers and if the newspapers write something, a lot of people do see that. He could not do it. But he tried to do it. I was so astonished. To try to kill a piece of art, because of jealousy.



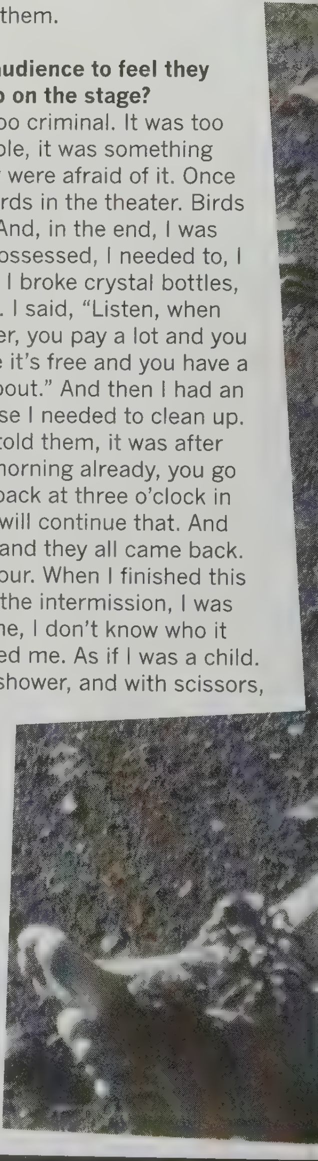


And he tried to create something similar?
He tried to be the Pope of happenings. Even today, he's trying to say he created happenings.

Have you ever seen the performances that he's put on?
I don't want to see them.

Did you allow the audience to feel they could also come up on the stage?
No, no, no, it was too criminal. It was too violent. It was terrible, it was something enormous and they were afraid of it. Once I liberated 1,000 birds in the theater. Birds flying everywhere! And, in the end, I was so inside that, so possessed, I needed to, I was full of crystals. I broke crystal bottles, something like that. I said, "Listen, when you go to the theater, you pay a lot and you have illiteracy. Here it's free and you have a lot more to think about." And then I had an intermission because I needed to clean up. And then you go, I told them, it was after one o'clock in the morning already, you go and you will come back at three o'clock in the morning, and I will continue that. And then they went out and they all came back. I stopped for one hour. When I finished this hour, when I got to the intermission, I was dirty. A woman came, I don't know who it was, and she cleaned me. As if I was a child. Cleaned me in the shower, and with scissors, cut my leather thing on my outfit. And I shaved my head in the sink.

I was so—I don't know how I was. A bird came and landed on my head. I was thinking like a person with a bird on my head. Incredible. That was the first Panic show.



ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

Were you essentially the director or were all three of you codirectors?
No, I was the director. And then Arrabal started to release his theater plays and Topor also.

I've read The Automobile Graveyard. How many Panic productions were there?
Everything I did, I called it Panic.

Yeah, even El Topo is a Panic production, I noticed in the Spanish-language print. What were some of the more wild things that happened at a Panic, at a happening?
I had two focuses. Focuses on white birds, what is the name of it?

A goose? Or a swan?

Mother Goose. There are two white geese in this scene. And then I came, the only person with white, I have dancers, naked on the floor. I have the orchestra up on stage, a rock orchestra. Waiting. And then I came, completely dressed in not leather, but brilliant black, of the fetishists. Vinyl. I have a knife, a big knife. And then the performance really started when I cut the necks of the two geese. That really started the happening. And the audience said "wait a minute", when

All images: *The Holy Mountain*

I took the geese, they started to say that it was impossible. How could I cut the necks with a knife?

And then the only thing I did, I remember I was possessed, crazy. I took the necks, I [makes a 'scrunch' sound]. I did it with my hands. I take this head away, with one movement, I took the head away. And they were so afraid, only one drop of blood came. And when the drop of blood came, all the people started to, like an attack of epilepsy, everything started to come. But it started with the sacrifice of these two birds.

But you were wearing black.
And then I was all in black and inside the black I was wearing a complete costume of beef steaks.

Actual food, beef steaks.
Beef steaks. Blood-red beef steaks, completely. And then I started to take the beef steaks and we were frying these beef steaks. Frying the beef steak and giving them to the public who started to eat these beef steaks.

Sterano Film
EL TOPO
ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY
ALLEN KLEIN ABKCO FILM
TECHNICOLOR

Did the headless geese run around in the audience, or did they stay in one area?
No, they died.

They didn't flap around in the audience.
No, they died.

Have you ever had other really negative reactions? Did you ever have people screaming and leaving? Did you have anyone yell at you?
Well, one woman, when I shaved my head, I wanted to put serpents here like the gorgon. I had a sack full of serpents. I put the serpents on my head in order to make my head come alive.

Like a living wig of snakes.
Yes, the gorgon. Snakes. But I was perspiring, and it was impossible to do it. And then I wanted to throw them to the public. And that started the collective panic. I stopped. I realized for a moment a person could die in a panic. And then I put the serpents back inside the sack and the audience sat back down. It was a real crazy scene. It was without limits. Ferlinghetti was there. Allen Ginsberg was there. Gregory Corso was there. André Breton was there. All the French intelligentsia were there. And they say it was the most incredible theater acting they ever saw in their life.

At least everyone there knows that you started it and not Lebel.
In one play, with the money I had, I reproduced in plaster, The Thinker of Rodin. It was enormous. And you can see this sculpture later, one or two like that, in The Holy Mountain, you see the production of them. And then with the machine, "brrrrrrr", I make holes in the head of The Thinker and ink, black ink, "squoosh", came from the holes I made in the head of The Thinker.

Did you capture any of these on film? Are any of these recorded?
All these happenings, somebody captured. But Lebel destroyed the pictures.

How did he get a hold of the pictures?
Because he organized the event, he organized the cameras. And the camera was there for all the shows. When he came, he was so astonished, but he shot it. And then he destroyed it. But some rolls appeared some years later. And they made a film and the name is He! Viva Dada. This is the name. Some breaths of that performance are there.

Maybe we'll see those someday?
Some of it is on the Fando y Lis DVD, in the Constellation Jodorowsky documentary. Some pieces, some moments are there.

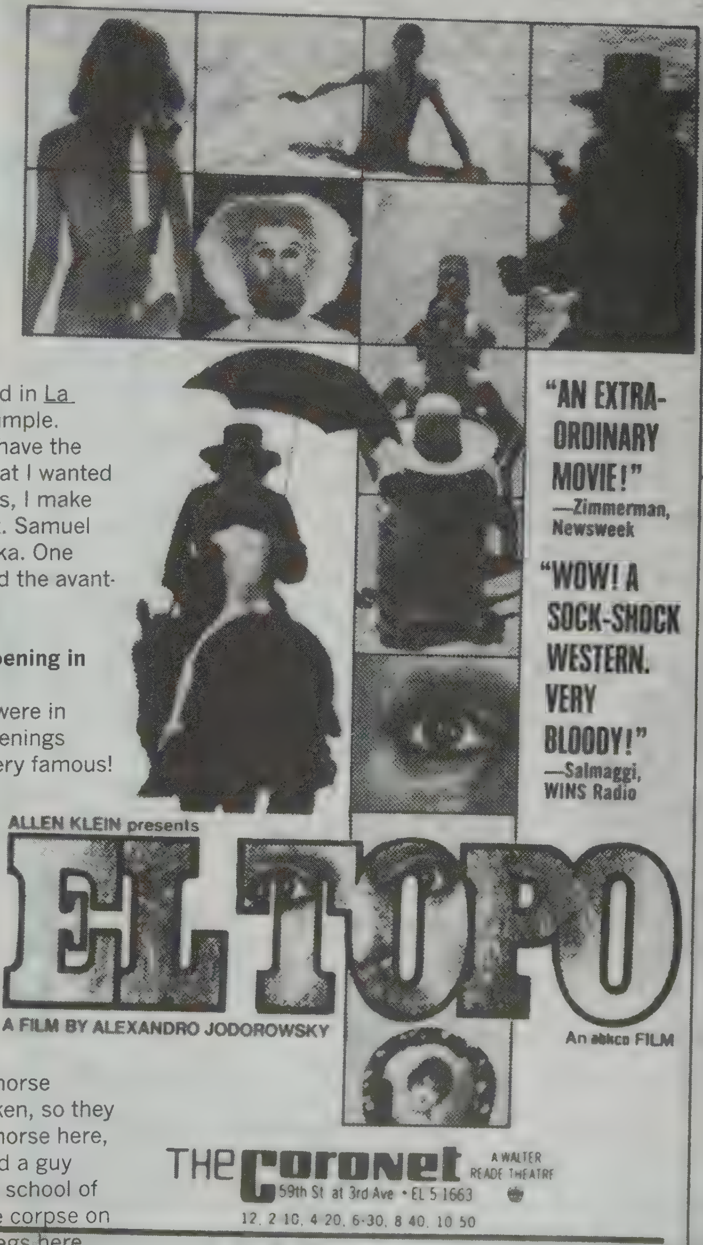
Were you thinking already of making films at the time you were doing this theater?
I would always think of making pictures. Because of that, I said I will make pictures when I have created an awareness of myself

and my work. But, for me, a picture is like poetry. For me, the best, not moviemaker, but the best artist, the best position artistically was Cocteau's. There was a poet. But, and this is important—around poetry he made theater, novels, movies, paintings. That was my ideal, because always I was writing poetry, even today. For me, myself, there is poetry. I see a picture as poetry. I wanted to make a picture when I was able to paint, to make the costumes, to make the music, to script the picture, to act, to direct the actors, to make everything. I wanted to make everything. That is a picture for me. As Cocteau did in La Belle et La Bête. That was my example.

I had to wait, because I didn't have the ability to make all that. I knew what I wanted to express. I made theatrical plays, I make [Eugène] Ionesco. I made Beckett. Samuel Beckett. [August] Strindberg, Kafka. One hundred theatrical plays. I created the avant-garde theater of Mexico.

Were the Panic productions happening in Paris or Mexico?
The most important happenings were in Paris. But I started to make happenings while I was in Mexico. And I got very famous! The University of Colombia called me to organize a happening. I said okay.

I was a very avant-garde artist. I wrote what I wanted to and when they read what I wanted to do, they closed the door and said goodbye. It was a scandal. Because I wanted to put one cross here and one cross here. I wanted two real horses, one horse black and one horse white, crucified on the cross. Broken, so they could be crucified. One crucified horse here, one crucified horse there. I wanted a guy with a real corpse, taken from the school of medicine, walking around with the corpse on his back. The head here and the legs here. Walking, like that. While I was making the happening. All the time.


"AN EXTRA-ORDINARY MOVIE!"
—Zimmerman, Newsweek
"WOW! A SOCK-SHOCK WESTERN. VERY BLOODY!"
—Salmaggi, WINS Radio
ALLEN KLEIN presents
EL TOPO
A FILM BY ALEXANDRO JODOROWSKY
An abkco FILM
THE Coronet
A WALTER READE THEATRE
59th St at 3rd Ave • EL 5 1663
12, 2 10, 4 20, 6-30, 8 40, 10 50

This was written this way?
Yes, yes. Walking around with the corpse. A real corpse. They went crazy, because of my idea. They didn't want to do it.

Now I realize it was too strong.

You didn't realize that at the time?
No, no. Three months ago, I found the notes. When I made the Panic, I wanted something really strong.

Were you already thinking of performing even as a child?
My life is like that. I lived in a little town, Tocopia. In Tocopia, I was born like a mutant. Nobody said it to me, but I was a mutant. I learned to read when I was five years old. I started to read novels. And then they shamed me twice in the school. I felt different, but my father didn't realize that. And he treated me like a normal child and put me with the normal children. They hated me, because I could read like brrrrrrp! really fast, and they were like [makes sound of child struggling to read]. And then I read all the libraries of Chile. I had no friends, so every day I went to read. I read a lot, the things of adults I read. I was like an adult.

I lived in my world and I went to the movies. There I saw Charles Laughton. Raymond Massey, the first science-fiction picture of H.G. Wells.

Things to Come.
Yes. That was my first science-fiction picture.

The big gun going right into the sky.
I liked it, I was a child. My love for movies started there. And Zorro. And every week, America made Flash Gordon. We'd have a new chapter every week.

And when they took me out of Tocopia, to Santiago, Chile, they took me because they liked my sister and they brought her to study there. I went there and I got fat, 100 kilos. Fat. And I died. I was dead. Until I was sixteen years old. I started my artistic life writing poems at sixteen years old and immediately I found a person who was interested in me and I started to make art. But from ten to sixteen, I almost. It was sad.

Sad because you were alone?
Sad because I was in a family of a businessmen, on a working-class street. Very ordinary. It's difficult to talk about. It was terrible for me, because I was a mutant, but in the worst part of the world. I needed to go out alone. I started writing poems and then I made magazines and puppets. I liked to make expressionist dance which just came after the war. Germans brought the expressionist dance to Chile. And then I created pantomime theater and then I made

Alexandro Jodorowsky's

TANA SACRA

– Der heilige Berg –

Phantastisch!
Schockierend!
Überwältigend!

FSK FREIGEGEBEN

poetry and I started work as an actor. I made my life.

And so you began to be happy. The theater became, dance, artwork.
Yes, immediately. After the first poem I did in Chile, they named me as the new Rimbaud.

Have those poems been published in English?
No, no, no, I forgot all that. They were my first poems. But they trained me as an artist, immediately. And then I went from obscurity to celebrity immediately.

ALEF-THAU
JODOROWSKY
LA VOIE DU TAROT

And you were around sixteen?
I started at sixteen; at nineteen, I had sixty people, a troupe, a company, very well known in Chile. When I went out in Chile at twenty-three, twenty-four, all of Chile knew me. My theater, my scene, all that. I did a lot of work in Chile by twenty-four years old.

You were doing the Panic productions and this film project came about.
Fando y Lis. It was enormous in Mexico. And we sold it to the Cannon Company. And Cannon Company opened the picture in New York and advertised it as a romantic film. And after three days they found they had a big failure. I was angry. I say, well, okay, I failed. Nobody wants to interview me, nobody wants to see me. The next time, they will search for me. And I went to Mexico and I said "you want something not underground? I will make a cowboy picture. Then you will come to see me." And then I started to make El Topo.

How did the financing come about?
For the financing, I worked with a crook, Roberto Viskin. Later, he stole $300,000 from me. And he was an accountant. And then he signed the check. You know, he signed a lot of checks, back-dated. He said for example, "I will pay at the end of the year." And then we did it like that, but he had no money. And when the picture came here to the United States and New York, we had to sell the picture in order to have the money to make the picture. We went to the big companies and they said, "Fantastic!" But when the agent came to sell the picture, they said we cannot sell this picture, it's impossible. And then Viskin lost one kilo a day. One kilo a day because we'd go to jail.

But, in the end, Allen Klein bought the picture. He had the money and he bought the picture.

Happenings are live and immediate and people are seeing you in person. When you felt that poetry inside you, that you could be a poet with film, did you feel that you had a separation from your audience by projecting film for them and not being in touch?
No, no. For me, it was a continuation, a normal continuation.

Does it still seem like a performance?
The happenings, you make a performance, but maybe they were not performance, they may not even be happening, but ephemeral. I did that because I think it's necessary to do it. But when you do that and it's going, like smoke, it's going. But it's a way, it's a form of expression. For me, it was a form of expression, to form myself, to discover what I wanted. You know? I came to the expression I wanted. El Topo is not my final expression. I am coming today to what I call Psychomagic. It's a therapy. The Gestalt groups are using this therapy now. It's a therapy where I give theatrical acts to the person to do, and using the theater as a therapy now, but a particular therapy.

For the particular individual, based on their personality?

He didn't believe in the picture. He didn't believe in Holy Mountain. He didn't like it. He didn't understand.

Did John Lennon like the movie?
Yes, but something terrible happened with John Lennon. He showed me his pictures. They are not extraordinary pictures. Fly and all that. A little boy does that, no? And a reporter from the Village Voice wanted to come to my shooting. And I let him come, because it would make a good article on the shooting of Holy Mountain.

And we were taking breakfast in the morning and he asked me what I thought about John Lennon's pictures. Like a private conversation. And I said, "well, a fly, three hundred asses walking... I don't think it's too good. Why do that?" And the guy from the Village Voice wrote "Jodorowsky doesn't like the pictures of John Lennon and Yoko Ono, he said this is shit." He exaggerated what I said. And then John Lennon got upset, because he felt I attacked Yoko Ono. I wrote to him, I sent flowers, I said, "I never said that" and they didn't want to believe me and they broke with me, because of that article.

So you haven't spoken to Yoko since.

Fantastic imagery from *The Holy Mountain.*

Yes, and the black woman, dressed in black, I dubbed with an adolescent man. And the blonde girl, a young girl, is dubbed with the voice of a 50-year-old woman. I changed it.

El Topo ended up being somewhat of a success. It was the first midnight film.
Yes. At the Elgin theater in New York.

How did John Lennon get involved?
The picture was first bought by, or he tried to buy it, Alan Douglas. At that time, he was a hippie producer of Malcolm X. And he loved El Topo, but he had no money. He made the book of El Topo with the screenplay. But he was very enthusiastic and he knew that John Lennon and Yoko Ono were making pictures. Do you know the films of Yoko Ono?

Oh, yeah. Fly. Rape. Yeah, I've seen all of them.
Yeah, they had those. And they would show them in the Elgin theater, at something like ten o'clock. And Douglas said, "The public will be there. See this picture? If you like this picture, please, say to the public to see this picture." And John Lennon loved El Topo. And then he showed his pictures and then he said "I have an extraordinary film to show to you. Rest here." And at midnight, El Topo started for the first time in the Elgin theater. All the critics were there, all the intellectual people were there, all the fans of John Lennon. And they saw El Topo and it was such a huge success, they had to continue to show it at midnight. That was it. And then John Lennon recommended that Allen Klein, who was with Apple, the Beatles' company, should buy El Topo.

And then he decided to release the soundtrack on Apple Records.
Yes.

Did Allen Klein finance Holy Mountain?
It was the money of John Lennon. Because Apple was John Lennon. And in some way, it was the money of John Lennon, because Lennon wanted to help me. And Allen Klein promised to give a million dollars. He gave a million dollars, but Viskin stole $300,000 and escaped to Israel.

And you never heard from him since?
I've never heard from him to this day.

Holy Mountain wasn't released in America.
No, never. Allen Klein didn't want to release it, because by then he'd had a fight with me.

He didn't believe in the picture. He didn't believe in Holy Mountain. He didn't like it. He didn't understand.

Did John Lennon like the movie?
Yes, but something terrible happened with John Lennon. He showed me his pictures. They are not extraordinary pictures. Fly and all that. A little boy does that, no? And a reporter from the Village Voice wanted to come to my shooting. And I let him come, because it would make a good article on the shooting of Holy Mountain.

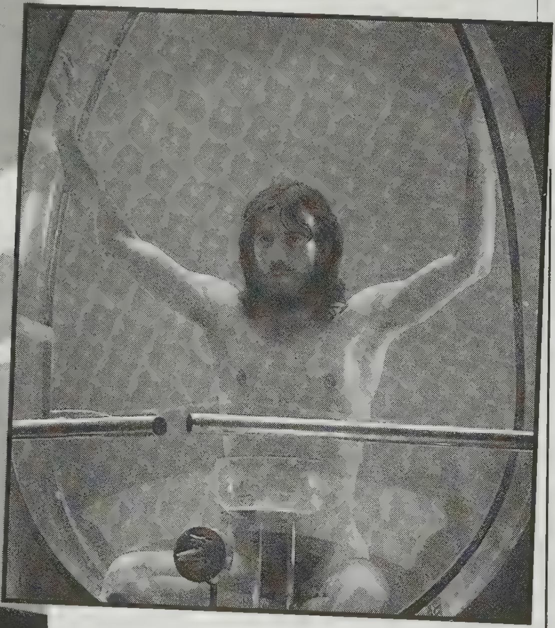
And we were taking breakfast in the morning and he asked me what I thought about John Lennon's pictures. Like a private conversation. And I said, "well, a fly, three hundred asses walking... I don't think it's too good. Why do that?" And the guy from the Village Voice wrote "Jodorowsky doesn't like the pictures of John Lennon and Yoko Ono, he said this is shit." He exaggerated what I said. And then John Lennon got upset, because he felt I attacked Yoko Ono. I wrote to him, I sent flowers, I said, "I never said that" and they didn't want to believe me and they broke with me, because of that article.

So you haven't spoken to Yoko since.

Fantastic imagery from *The Holy Mountain*.

No more. They didn't want to believe that I didn't say that. They didn't want to believe. Maybe a lot of people at that time were attacking them for their films.

Well, he had left the Beatles and everyone hated Yoko because they believe she was responsible for breaking up the Beatles.
He saw me like a traitor, because I was picking on his woman. It was the journalist who exaggerated. All I said was "Why do that?" That's the only thing I said. This is repetition. A fly and a boy, or a person walking, 300 persons walking.



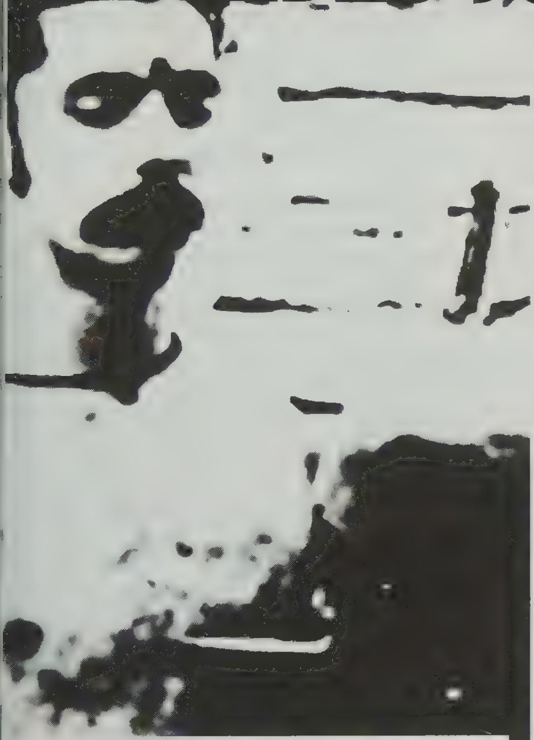
The butts, yeah.
Or taking a shot of a stone and go out to the sky—Why? Why do that? That's the only thing I said. And there's this guy saying, Jodorowsky said they are awful, Yoko Ono is shit. I provided a means for him to attack Yoko Ono himself.

I liked John Lennon and Yoko, they gave me a lot. They helped me a lot. What can I do?

Was Holy Mountain released in the rest of the world?

The Holy Mountain and (right) *El Topo*.

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY



Yes. Big success, enormous success in Italy. Enormous. That year James Bond came in first, and the second biggest picture was Holy Mountain.

Holy Mountain also works as a performance piece. When it ends with you looking directly at the audience, it's something that on video gets a little lost, but when you're watching in a theater, and we've been watching these magical events and watching transformations walking up to the mountain, the audience is waiting for these answers, the audience is traveling with the people in the movie.
Listen, at that time, my idea was to illuminate the actors I chose in the street and in the end, when the picture was finished, to go to all the world to illuminate people. And that didn't happen.

Yeah, no, you can only do so much.
It didn't happen. I wanted it, but it didn't happen... And I became a human being.

You tried to climb your holy mountain and walked right through instead.
Listen, at that time I was so crazy, I think I am making a holy work, holy mountain, holy work, I am making something that's like a sutra, maybe. Like a sacred work. A picture can be a way to get enlightenment, as a zen, as transcendental meditation. And then the actor will get enlightenment. Even if I take from people from the street, anyone, with this picture will become enlightened. And then we'll make a group, we'll be a master and we'll help the world to get conscience. That was my idea. It was a crazy idea.

It was several years before your next film, Tusk.
I had not one penny, I was in misery. I did that in order to feed myself and my family. I did the best that I could, but it's not good. It's not a real picture.

And that was followed by Santa Sangre.
And then I made Santa Sangre.

Which is a beautiful picture.
That I liked.

Critics enjoyed that movie, audiences liked that movie. It's a narrative, they can follow it. And your ideas are very much there, the eagle and the boy needing to break free from his own self.
I came there too. This picture is some kind of therapy.

But with Rainbow Thief, therapy didn't seem to be—
No, I made it in order to know what it was like to make a film professionally, I wanted to learn things. I was poor, I didn't have machines, I didn't have the things of the movies. I didn't have a professional photographer, I didn't have a staff. I wanted to know that. And then I made that picture.

Was Santa Sangre any sort of therapy for yourself?
Always a work is a therapy for the artist. Always. Because you fight. In order to make your picture in the condition you want, it's an incredible fight.

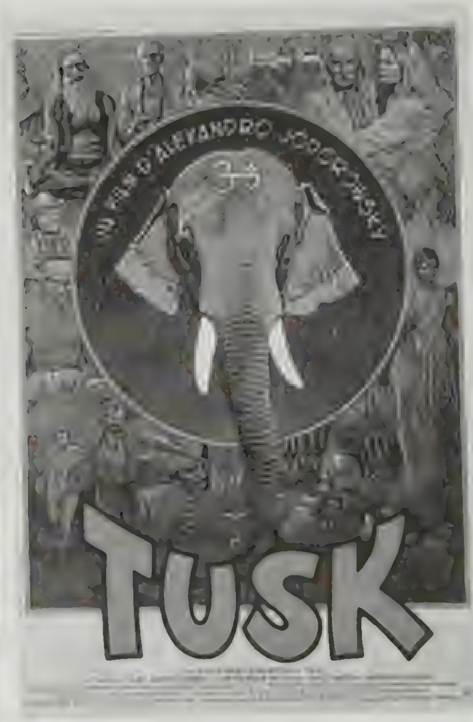
You're writing a psychotherapy book?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. The Dance of Reality, this is the title.

Is it only in French or Spanish?
No, only in Spanish. It will get published in Spain. There will be an English translation, I hope.

I know you have Sons of El Topo completed as a film script.
Yes, there's some more therapy. I don't know if it will be made. I can do that. I will be happy to do that.

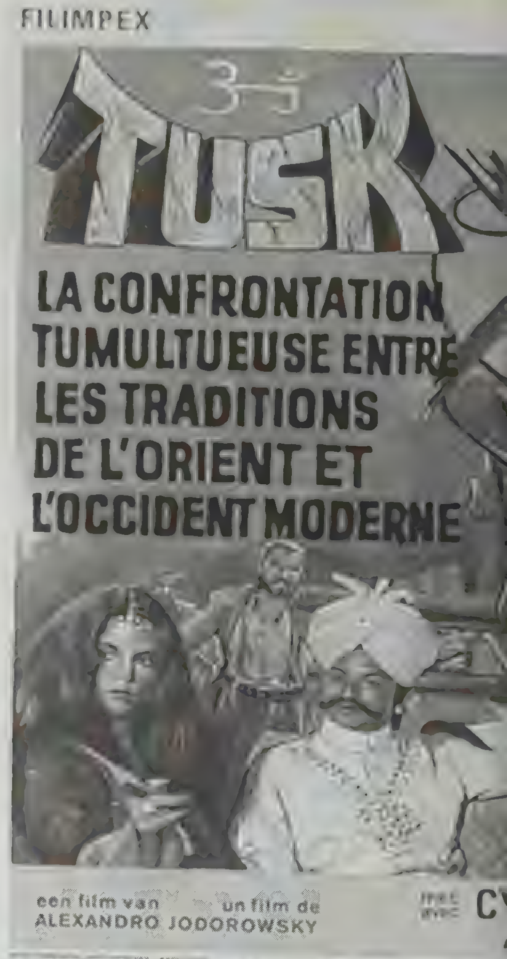
Would you be happy to make the film like Lars von Trier's Dogme style?
Yes, it's good for him, not good for me.


UN FILM D'ALEXANDRO JODOROWSKY
TUSK

I've been hearing rumors that you'll be making stuff with Marilyn Manson.
Well, he wanted to know me. I don't know, it's not sure. We'll see. I have an appointment with him.

Have you had people make movies from your written work?
Yes, Alfonso Arau wanted to make a script of mine. He failed.

Arrabal's films somewhat resemble some of the work that you were doing.
He was very inspired by my happenings.


FILIMPEX
TUSK
LA CONFRONTATION TUMULTUEUSE ENTRE LES TRADITIONS DE L'ORIENT ET L'OCCIDENT MODERNE
een film van
un film de
ALEXANDRO JODOROWSKY
met
avec

Did his movies come before or after Fando y Lis?
After. Viva El Muerte came out around the same time as El Topo.

But you didn't write any of the material for his films?
No.

No, he was totally doing that all on his own.
Totally. Marianne, a little bit with you.

[Alejandro gestures to his mate at that time, novelist Marianne Costa. She joins him on the chair.]

Marianne. What is it to be my lover? What do you think, I am like an old man? I am thirty-seven years older than you.

Marriane: Yes, you are.

Well, what do you think about that?

M: I don't think. I'm in love with you, darling. But I will die thirty-seven years before you.

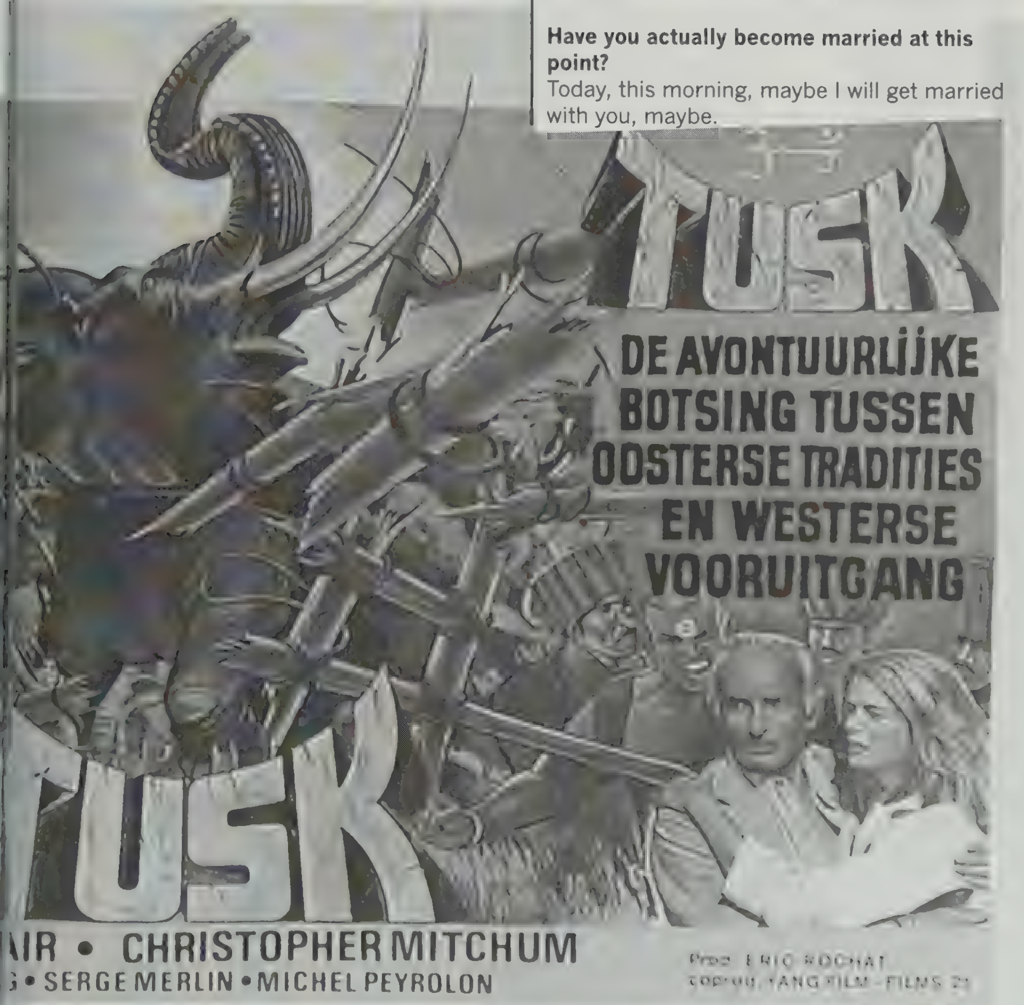
M: No, life is not mathematics. And maybe not. And you always claim that you will live until you're 120 years old. So I suppose around ninety years old, I will be able to deal with my own life without you, so it's okay.

Have you actually become married at this point?
Today, this morning, maybe I will get married with you, maybe.

M: I'm not an American woman, so I don't really need to get married. It's okay with me.

If by my age, if I am quiet and still, what will you do?

M: I will buy a monkey.


TUSK
DE AVONTUURLIJKE BOTSING TUSSEN OOSTERSE TRADITIES EN WESTERSE VOORUITGANG
TUSK
IR • CHRISTOPHER MITCHUM
G • SERGE MERLIN • MICHEL PEYROLON
Prod. ERIC ROCHAT

You want to have a child, no?

M: I don't know. I might go to a sperm bank. Who knows?

From one of my family.

M: Or I might adopt a monkey or I might take a used condom from one of your sons. Or I might take a lover and the three of us will live happily ever after.

Ahh! I am too jealous for that. Later I will be an old man, like this [makes walking with a cane gesture].

M: Or I might not have kids and stop the overgrowing population on the planet.

But it's not just for you, because they say a woman needs to have only one. I feel very selfish.

M: But I'm only thirty-four, it's not urgent. You can have babies until you're fifty now, right?

It's different. In nine more years, I will be eighty years old. Do you realize what is eighty years old?

M: If you become senile, I will just leave you.

No, I will never become senile. Even if I have an illness in the brain, my mind is open and open and open. Now, sexually, we are good, no?

M: Fine.

What do you think?

M: Really, fine.

Are you satisfied sexually?

M: Yes, I am. You know I am; stop fishing for compliments.

No, no, I am not—a person who's seventy years old can't satisfy a woman of thirty-five years, it's a legend.

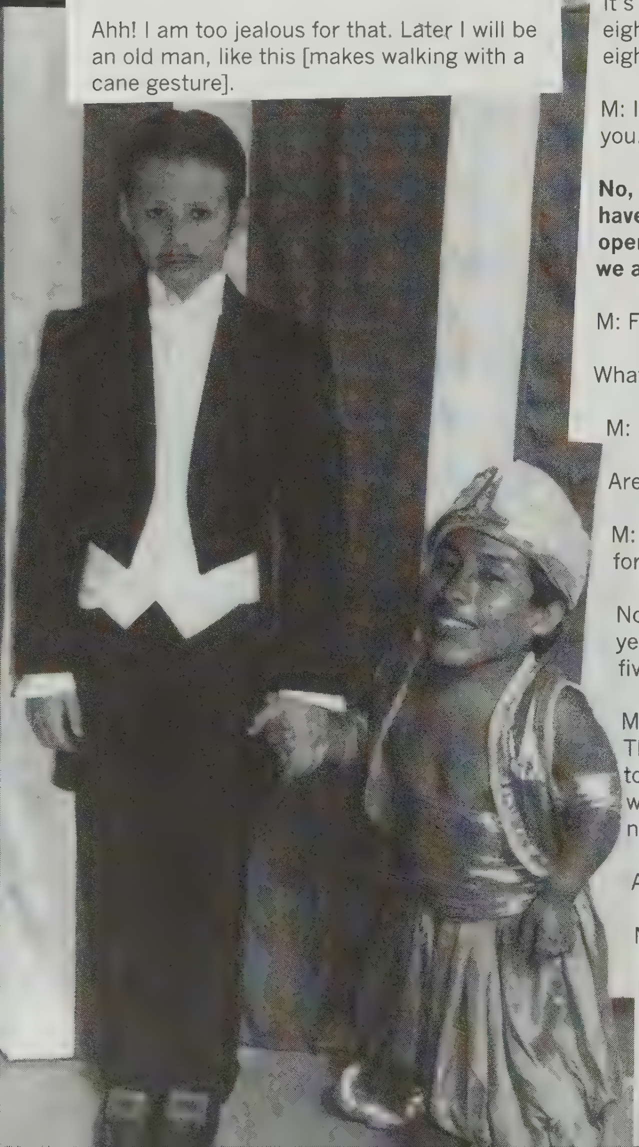
M: You're Jodorowsky, he can do that. That might not be true of every guy in town, but someone who's done El Topo when I was born can deal with me right now.

And look at me. I am fat.

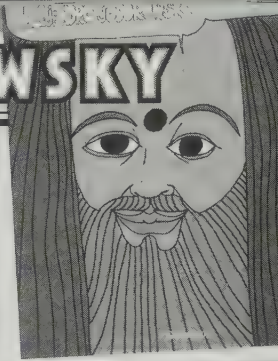
M: A little bit.

I am old. I am not beautiful.

M: You're cute. I think you are cute.



Adan Jodorowsky and



I have poor teeth. I have implants for my teeth.

M: So do I, I have one here. Right here.

Oh, yeah? And these are not disgusting things? You are not disgusted of my body?

M: No, it's okay, you smell nice.

I smell nice.

M: Yeah.

Because for me you are a pleasure, but how I can be a pleasure for you, that is the problem.

M: Because you are not stupid. That's a great pleasure.

I heard that you were able to help Marianne with some dealings with her mother.
We make a lot of acts of psychomagic in order to help her. I also massage Marianne's eyes. Her father said to her, "You have little eyes. You have little eyes." Marianne's father. And all the time Marianne was thinking of herself like that. And I take Marianne and I start to open her eyes. I open her eyes in order to say completely the sensation of the eyes. I massage her eyes, every day I massage her eyes. I open her eyes.

And now the look is different, because I take out the whole concept of her father. It's true, right?

I did that. And look at these eyes, they're beautiful eyes. Why did he think she had little eyes? It's crazy.

And also some work with your mother?
M: Yes, I had a very horrible mother. And like many people, when you have a horrible mother, it's a matter of life and death, like they want you to die, subconsciously. So either you kill yourself in many ways to please them. Or at some point, you have to metaphorically kill them in order to be the winner of your own life. And so Alejandro gave me this thing to do, which I have to mention, he doesn't do often, because there was the killing of an animal involved. He doesn't like that.

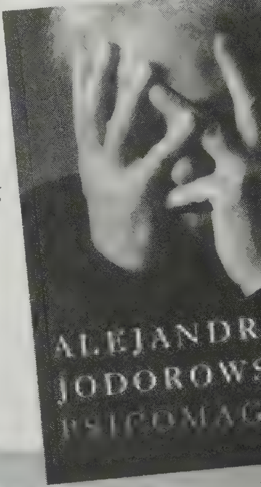
It was a chicken.

M: A chicken. A female chicken. Image of the mother. And I actually had to kill it. And I'm not an animal killer at all. It's not my thing.

But, listen, we went today to the store to get a chicken sandwich. You eat the chicken sandwich as a normal thing, but it's a killing. It's the killing of a chicken. And nobody's saying nothing. But when you need to kill the chicken, then the sandwich has a meaning.

M: Yes, exactly. It's true.

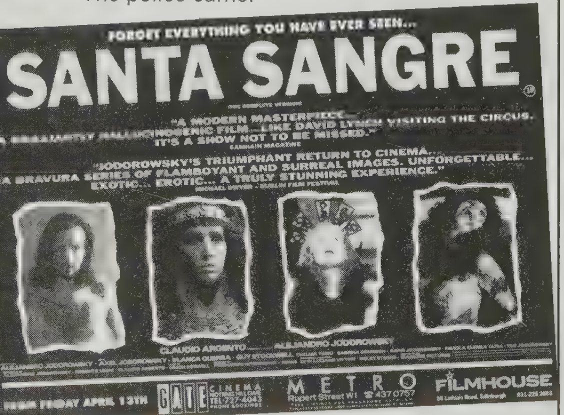
And then I give you the meaning of life and death, if you kill the chicken. Because I say later we will eat the chicken.



SANTA
SANGRI

M: No, I gave it to the cats. You told me to give it to the cats. It was a very hard thing. The first step was killing the thing. And I had wanted to kill myself at some point and there was this paper cutter, which was a very sick thing to do. So, instead of taking the right tool to quickly kill the chicken, I thought I had to kill it with this thing. And it was quite a butchery. But I fell into some kind of trance inside, because it's a very powerful thing. It takes you. It's really like a ceremony. And I started screaming. It was eleven in the morning. And we were in our very bourgeois apartment at that time in Paris, near the Champs-Élysée and all. And I was in this kitchen with windows open because I didn't know I was going to be screaming. And I screamed. I just went Agghhhhh! But it actually lasted for like five minutes.

The police came.


FORGET EVERYTHING YOU HAVE EVER SEEN...
SANTA SANGRE
"A MODERN MASTERPIECE... LIKE DAVID LYNCH VISITING THE CIRCUS. IT'S A SHOW NOT TO BE MISSED."
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M: And they sent the police because I was screaming so. And they arrived with my hands full of blood in front of the police and Alejandro went, "Oh, it is nothing, my wife was just trying to kill a chicken for tonight's dinner." And the craziest thing is reality helps you when you do this kind of thing. There was one woman among the police who actually often did that in her village, in the West Indies or something. She explained to me how to peel the feathers off the chicken, which I didn't know. She was like, "Oh, you have to boil water and then you put it here like this, it's much easier."

And the second phase was that I was supposed to open the belly of this chicken and take the guts and tie them around my waist and stay like that for nine hours, which was to represent—

That's the umbilical cord.

M: Yes, the umbilical cord, because it represented tying the womb on my belly, this very deadly womb. And that was very easy for me. It was like lying with the chicken for nine hours and then I had to cut this thing and send it back to my mother and say, Now it's cut. And cook the chicken for the cats. And it worked. I was never depressed after that. I had spent half of my life being depressed.

Taking Prozac.

M: Yeah, I just went poof! Oooh, life is beautiful.

You were able to stop taking Prozac.
M: Yeah, I had the tendency to think that what I was doing was no good. I would start things and then they wouldn't work. Or I would wake up and feel this weight inside, so I didn't cheer up easily. But there was something in me that was very hard, very dark, very achy and I was fed up with it. Alejandro said, "You don't have to be like this." And he helped, yeah, really. It's like I killed the dark part of me. Which was not my mother. She's just a person. But this part of my mother that was embodied in me and hurting me.

See, it was a black chicken. And the policewoman who gave the...

M: ...The advice, it was a black lady, it's true.

So you're all better now.
M: Yeah.

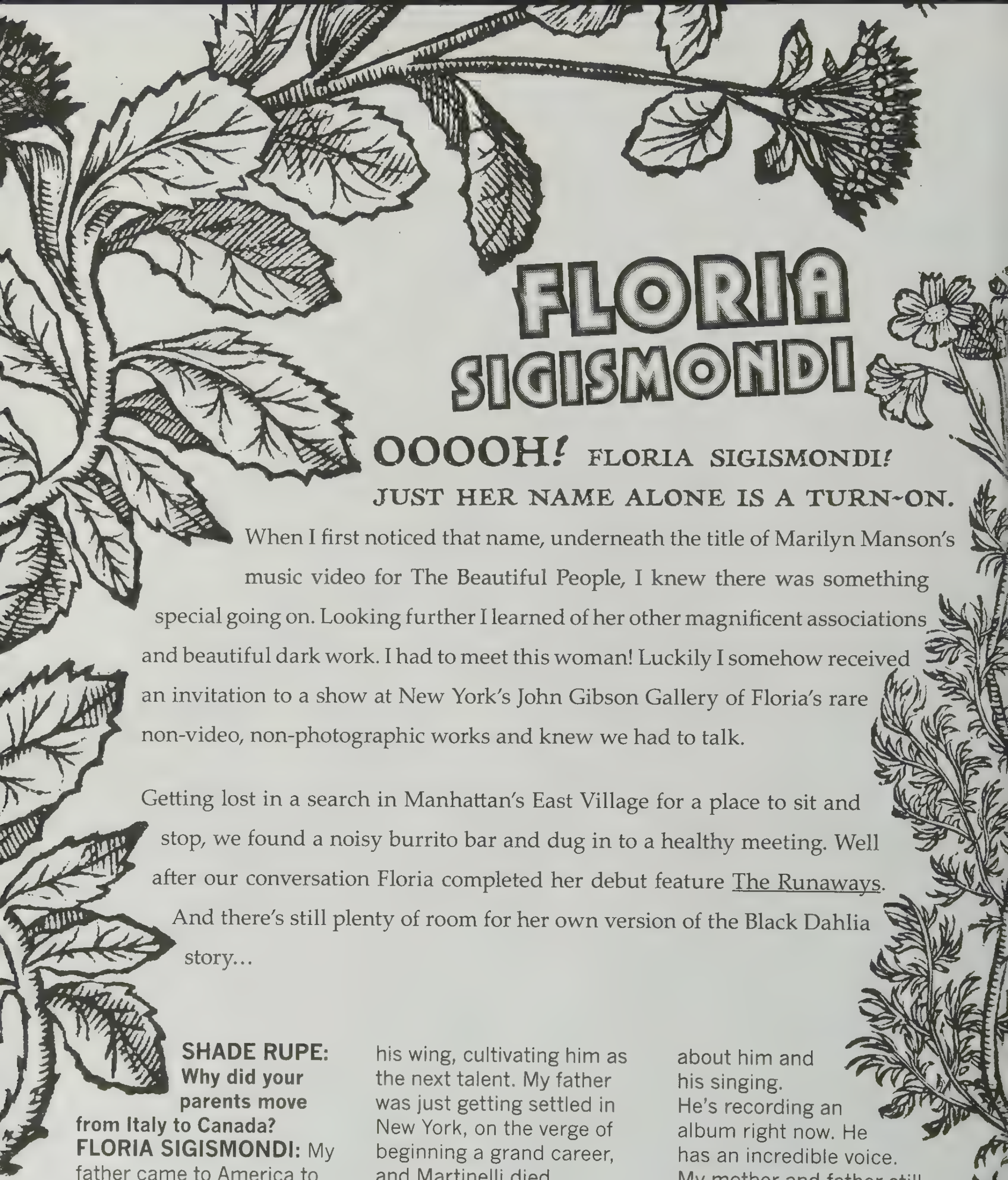
Una bese?

M: Una besito.

[they kiss]

Muchas gracias, Alejandro y Marianne. ◉

Next page: *Santa Sangre.*



FLORIA SIGISMONDI

OOOOH! FLORIA SIGISMONDI! JUST HER NAME ALONE IS A TURN-ON. When I first noticed that name, underneath the title of Marilyn Manson's music video for The Beautiful People, I knew there was something special going on. Looking further I learned of her other magnificent associations and beautiful dark work. I had to meet this woman! Luckily I somehow received an invitation to a show at New York's John Gibson Gallery of Floria's rare non-video, non-photographic works and knew we had to talk.

Getting lost in a search in Manhattan's East Village for a place to sit and stop, we found a noisy burrito bar and dug in to a healthy meeting. Well after our conversation Floria completed her debut feature The Runaways. And there's still plenty of room for her own version of the Black Dahlia story…

SHADE RUPE: Why did your parents move from Italy to Canada?

FLORIA SIGISMONDI: My father came to America to pursue an opera career. We had relatives in Hamilton, Ontario, so he dropped us off and he came to New York to study with Martinelli. Wrote to my mom every day.

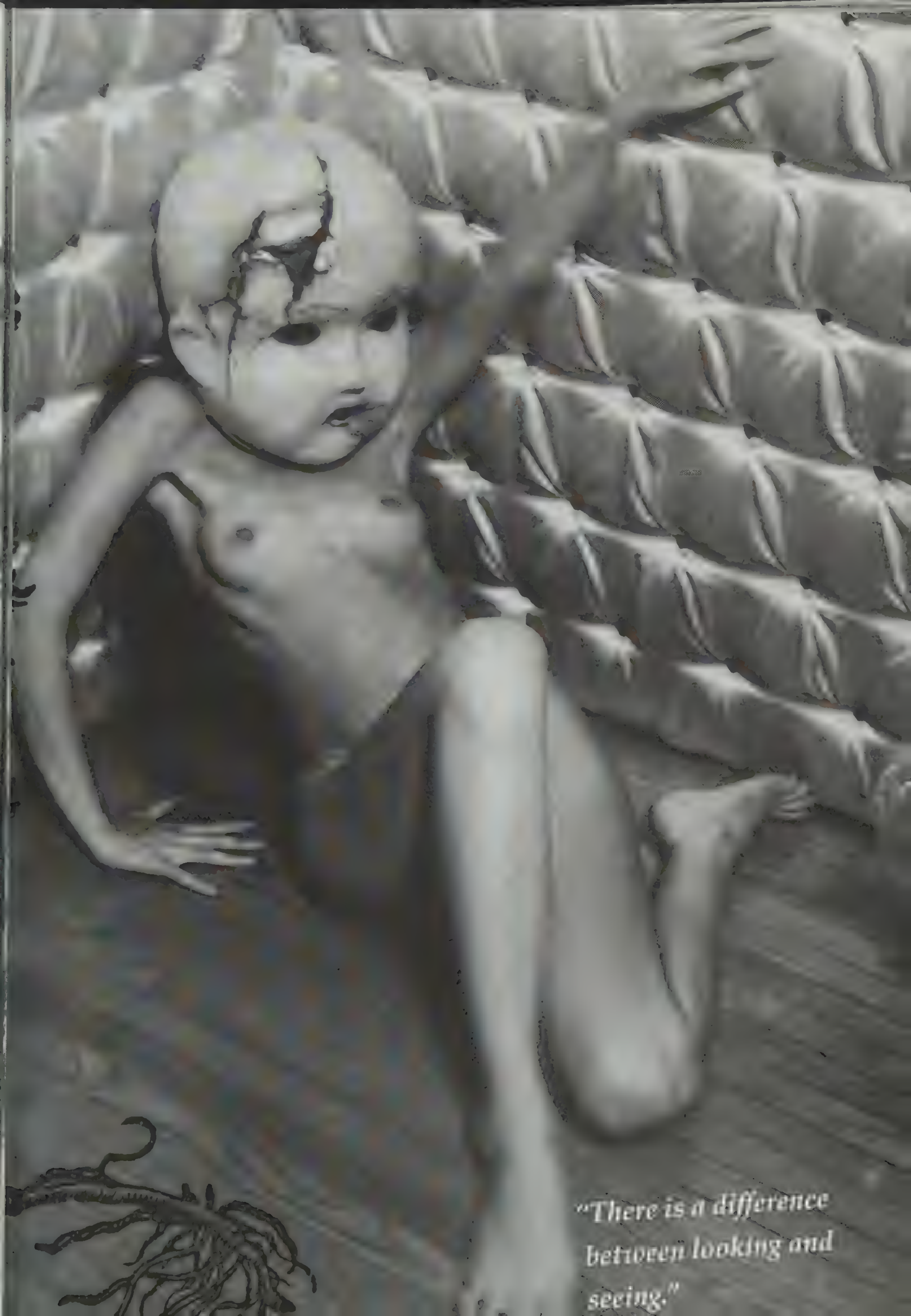
Martinelli was huge, like Caruso, a bass who sang at the Met for forty years. He took my father under his wing, cultivating him as the next talent. My father was just getting settled in New York, on the verge of beginning a grand career, and Martinelli died.

My father didn't know a word of English; it was hard for him to get around town speaking only Italian. When they asked him what he could do, and he couldn't put the words together, they just said, Why don't you go home to your family? He's had many articles written about him and his singing. He's recording an album right now. He has an incredible voice. My mother and father still perform together. They sing together all the time.

Are most of your relatives in Canada?

Yeah, we have lots of relatives there. In Windsor, Hamilton, and Detroit. A lot in Detroit.

From Floria Sigismondi's *Redemption*, published by Die Gestalten Verlag.



"There is a difference between looking and seeing."

New York's always been an expensive place to live and we didn't have any relatives here. We went where the relatives were, and then my father came here.

He lived in Brooklyn. He told me stories about how he had no money, but all he had to do was just look down. He said, "All I had to do was look down all the way home, and walk like this all the way home and I'd find ten dollars in change by the time I got home."

Floria and Tosca Verna Sigismondi-Berlin at the Tribeca Grand, NY. Photo Shade Rune

I remember finding a whole mess of pennies and nickels on the street in one big clump one day. It was enough money for a bagel and I took little bites to make it last all day long.

We grew up looking in the couches for change so my dad could take the bus to work. In old jackets and pants.

You seem to have a great relationship with your parents.

We're pretty close. They're so open. Not once have my parents said, "Oh, Floria, I don't know about this shit that you're doing." They were interviewed, and they asked, "What do you think of what your daughter does?" They said, "She lives in art."

They've always been so supportive of me, and I've learned a lot from their creative world. Opera is so tragic and so full of color, and the stories don't always have happy endings.

Is there anywhere you'd really like to be?

Well, here in New York. Definitely. As a base. I'm like a nomad, being born in Italy, moving to Canada, living in England and America. I feel I've learned to create my environment from these moves. Staying in one place everything begins to seem the same. By moving around I see new things, see things change. I really like New York; it changes all around me all the time. I can stop outside and see something different all the time.

I've visited L.A. So much can happen, career-wise, in L.A. in one week. You can also live in L.A. and not bump into anybody. You can live in your car; it's very isolated. Toronto is a small clean Canadian version of New York. It's got its Chinatown and Little India and other very eclectic areas. I go back there all the time and I do a lot of filming there.

I feel that your work shows your own personal world. That the images overlap in areas and create their own space. Your imagery seems to be creating its own world, even when you're creating for various artists.
I completely see it in my mind and then it's about recreating what I see in my mind. Though it's more than recreating, it's an incredible chance to be in the world I've created. I want to live there, surround myself and play in it. I feel most comfortable when I'm on set, when I'm getting it out of my head and into the real world.

Do you have interest in stage design?
I would love to do stage direction and design. I'd love to play with that. To create a three-dimensional world on a stage.

Have you had to slow down on your thoughts to work within budgets?
Oh definitely. I don't use music videos anymore as an outlet for creativity as I don't like most of the music, and the

From Floria's 'Come Part

budgets are so restraining.

The budgets for the music that I do like are so low I can't do what I want.

I did do something for Amon Tobin—whom I've been a fan of for a while. It was very low budget and I ended up doing so much myself, even being my own director of photography, shooting it on digital video. I felt this was a great place for me to experiment as a photographer, having a handheld camera and controlling the images myself.

Would you be interested in making a Dogme film?

It's funny you say that, because last night I started writing a new script from scratch. If I can be anywhere, where would it be, and what would I want to say with the film? If you're going to have someone sit there and watch your film for an hour-and-a-half, you should use it as a vehicle to say something.

I like using reality the way that the Dogme films do. There's something very real and gritty that I really love. I really like that style and the style of editing.

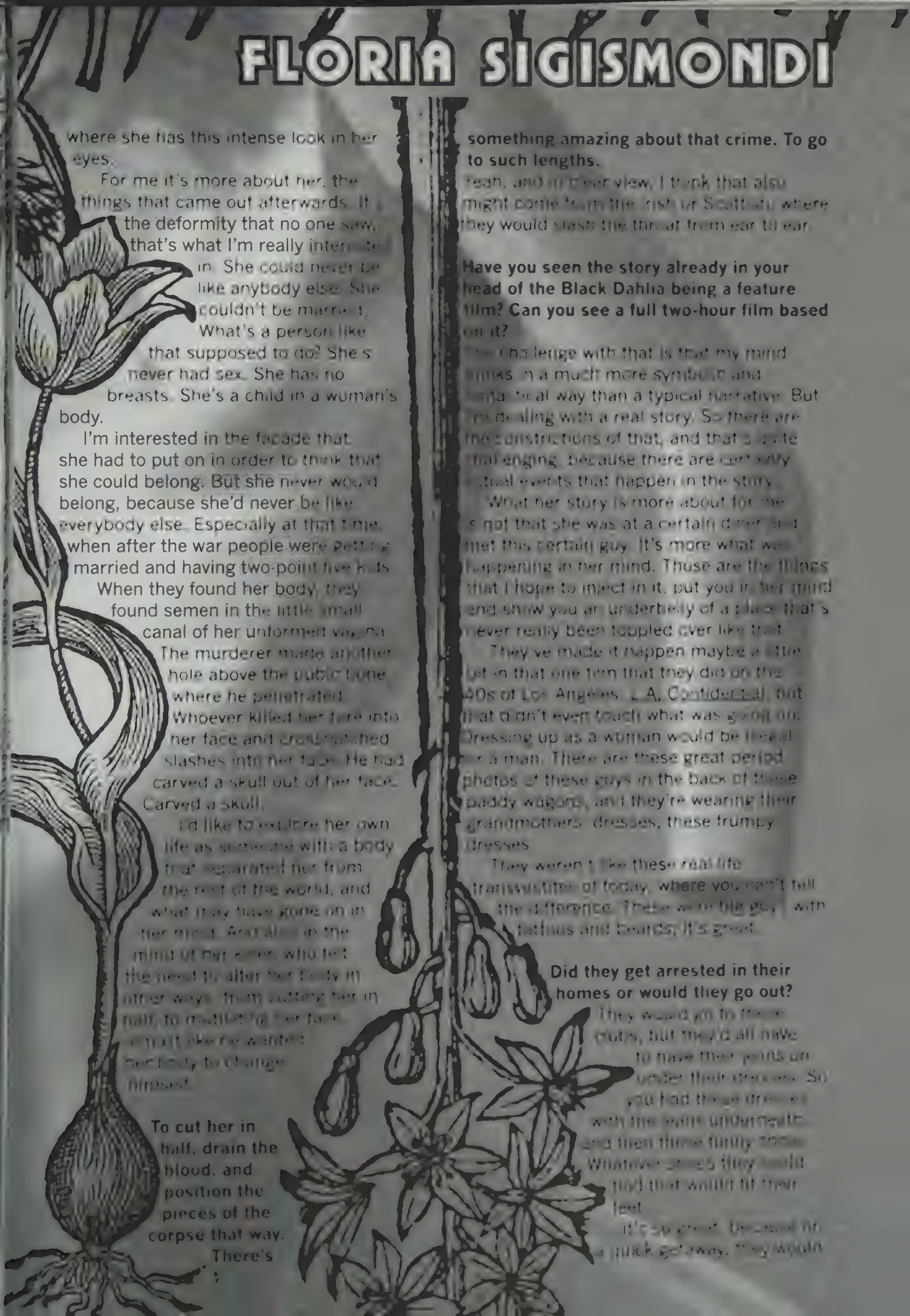
That's sort of how we see. We may pay attention to someone walking into a room and then see something behind them. I really like Alphaville, the cutting in time and the jump cuts. I feel that reflects our own ways of thinking and seeing things much more than a straightforward film.

I heard you were working on a Black Dahlia film.

Right now the rights have switched hands so I'm not sure where it's at. Obviously her body is the thing that everyone is fascinated about. Her body has achieved cult status. She has this mug shot that has really fascinated me.

[illegible]

FLORIA SIGISMONDI



where she has this intense look in her eyes.

For me it's more about her, the things that came out afterwards. It's the deformity that no one saw, that's what I'm really interested in. She could never be like anybody else. She couldn't be married. What's a person like that supposed to do? She's never had sex. She has no breasts. She's a child in a woman's body.

I'm interested in the facade that she had to put on in order to think that she could belong. But she never would belong, because she'd never be like everybody else. Especially at that time, when after the war people were getting married and having two-point five kids. When they found her body, they found semen in the little small canal of her unformed vagina. The murderer made another hole above the pubic bone where he penetrated. Whoever killed her tore into her face and crosshatched slashes into her face. He had carved a skull out of her face. Carved a skull.

I'd like to explore her own life as someone with a body that separated her from the rest of the world, and what may have gone on in her mind. And also in the mind of her killer, who felt the need to alter her body in other ways, from cutting her in half, to mutilating her face, [illegible] like he wanted her body to change himself.

To cut her in half, drain the blood, and position the pieces of the corpse that way. There's something amazing about that crime. To go to such lengths.

Yeah, and in their view, I think that also might come from the Irish or Scottish, where they would slash the throat from ear to ear.

Have you seen the story already in your head of the Black Dahlia being a feature film? Can you see a full two-hour film based on it?

The challenge with that is that my mind thinks in a much more symbolic and fantastical way than a typical narrative. But I'm dealing with a real story. So there are the constrictions of that, and that's quite challenging, because there are certainly actual events that happen in the story.

What her story is more about for me is not that she was at a certain diner and met this certain guy. It's more what was happening in her mind. Those are the things that I hope to inject in it, put you in her mind and show you an underbelly of a place that's never really been toppled over like that.

They've made it happen maybe a little bit in that one film that they did on the 50s of Los Angeles, *L.A. Confidential*, but that didn't even touch what was going on. Dressing up as a woman would be illegal for a man. There are these great period photos of these guys in the back of these paddy wagons, and they're wearing their grandmothers' dresses, these frumpy dresses.

They weren't like these real-life transvestites of today, where you can't tell the difference. These were big guys with tattoos and beards. It's great.

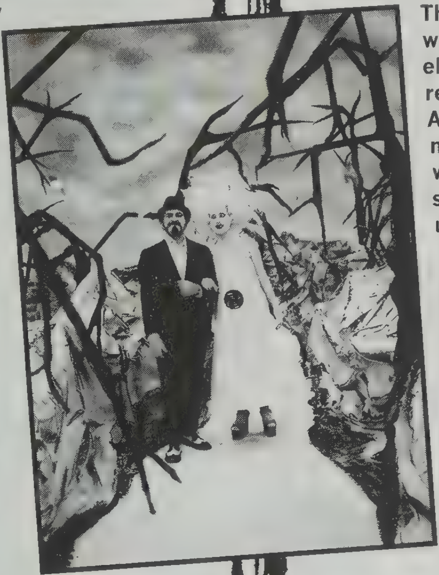
Did they get arrested in their homes or would they go out?

They would go to these clubs, but they'd all have to have their pants on under their dresses. So you had these dresses with the pants underneath, and then these funny shoes. Whatever shoes they could find that would fit their feet.

It's so great, because no [illegible] a quick getaway. They wouldn

just rip the dress off, and that's it. But a lot of them would get caught. There were all these underground clubs that I'm so fascinated with.

She had this body that was neither male nor female. She didn't have developed ovaries, and we don't know if she had anything male developed inside of her. That's the angle that I'm really, really fascinated with, especially in the time of that period.



I read an article in Newsweek or Time about children born with ambiguous genitalia. One little boy was raised as a little girl. They weren't sure of the genitalia, and the parents made a choice to raise the child as a girl. It's kind of sad it must be an either/or.
In certain cultures people that are born with both sexes are praised as great teachers because they understand the secrets of both sexes, the secrets of men and women. Men and women think that there's something they don't know about the other. Men look at women and think, What's up with them? And women do the same. In a comfortable environment, the hermaphrodite might be able to tell us. I don't really think we're all that different.

I wonder if that happens in the mind also.
I think if you're born in a place where people have a hard time with it, it can fuck you up, like anything. You could be the most incredibly brainy person and be so fucked up because of your environment. But if it's nurtured and looked up to and praised, I wonder.

That one photograph of you with the rare cat, with the elongation of your neck, reminds me of the photos of African women who band their necks for that effect. And the way your hand is perfectly straight and it doesn't appear uncomfortable.

If you could modify your own body at all, what would you do? I would love to remove my feet; they hurt.
It's so funny that you say that. That's one thing I've always said. I'd love to remove my feet. I'd love to put my body to sleep. Because I can't sleep. I have a lot to do, and I have to force myself to go to sleep.

I was sleeping on a very bizarre schedule while working on the John Gibson show for two months.

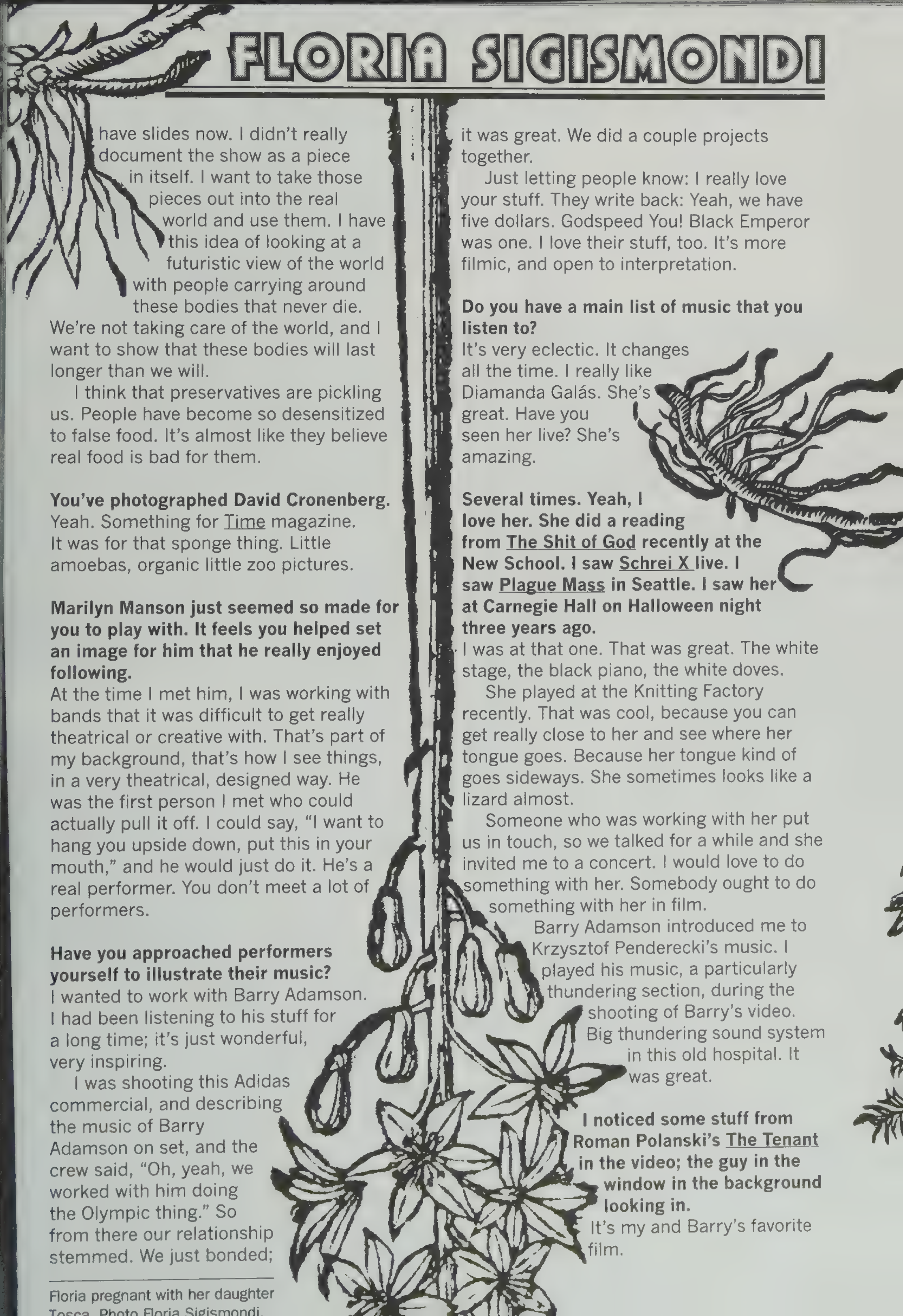
Do you like the nighttime?
Yes, I love the stillness. That's why I really love it. The quiet.

There's a very different energy.
It's not just quiet, it's not just the phone or people like that. It's a different quiet. You feel that there's nothing going on.

Was the John Gibson your first sculpture show?
Yes. I think I'll grow into more sculpture. My new script is inspired by this show. I can see my photography going further into using sculpture. My sister has been doing sculpture for a while, with metal. I used one of her pieces in a photograph in Redemption.

I documented the show just last week and

Previous page: Self-portrait. This page: Domenica and Lino Sigismondi. From *Redemption*.



have slides now. I didn't really document the show as a piece in itself. I want to take those pieces out into the real world and use them. I have this idea of looking at a futuristic view of the world with people carrying around these bodies that never die. We're not taking care of the world, and I want to show that these bodies will last longer than we will.

I think that preservatives are pickling us. People have become so desensitized to false food. It's almost like they believe real food is bad for them.

You've photographed David Cronenberg.
Yeah. Something for Time magazine. It was for that sponge thing. Little amoebas, organic little zoo pictures.

Marilyn Manson just seemed so made for you to play with. It feels you helped set an image for him that he really enjoyed following.
At the time I met him, I was working with bands that it was difficult to get really theatrical or creative with. That's part of my background, that's how I see things, in a very theatrical, designed way. He was the first person I met who could actually pull it off. I could say, "I want to hang you upside down, put this in your mouth," and he would just do it. He's a real performer. You don't meet a lot of performers.

Have you approached performers yourself to illustrate their music?
I wanted to work with Barry Adamson. I had been listening to his stuff for a long time; it's just wonderful, very inspiring.

I was shooting this Adidas commercial, and describing the music of Barry Adamson on set, and the crew said, "Oh, yeah, we worked with him doing the Olympic thing." So from there our relationship stemmed. We just bonded; it was great. We did a couple projects together.

Just letting people know: I really love your stuff. They write back: Yeah, we have five dollars. Godspeed You! Black Emperor was one. I love their stuff, too. It's more filmic, and open to interpretation.

Do you have a main list of music that you listen to?
It's very eclectic. It changes all the time. I really like Diamanda Galás. She's great. Have you seen her live? She's amazing.

Several times. Yeah, I love her. She did a reading from The Shit of God recently at the New School. I saw Schrei X live. I saw Plague Mass in Seattle. I saw her at Carnegie Hall on Halloween night three years ago.
I was at that one. That was great. The white stage, the black piano, the white doves.

She played at the Knitting Factory recently. That was cool, because you can get really close to her and see where her tongue goes. Because her tongue kind of goes sideways. She sometimes looks like a lizard almost.

Someone who was working with her put us in touch, so we talked for a while and she invited me to a concert. I would love to do something with her. Somebody ought to do something with her in film.

Barry Adamson introduced me to Krzysztof Penderecki's music. I played his music, a particularly thundering section, during the shooting of Barry's video. Big thundering sound system in this old hospital. It was great.

I noticed some stuff from Roman Polanski's The Tenant in the video; the guy in the window in the background looking in.
It's my and Barry's favorite film.

Floria pregnant with her daughter Tosca. Photo Floria Sigismondi.

It would be nice to see more movies like that, but the studio readers don't understand them. They don't fit into the idea of a Hollywood film, so they don't get made.

Oh, no, it's crazy the way things are done. You can see the films that are being made. You can see it in theaters, reflected.

There's ways to make it happen, but you know The Exorcist would not be made today.
The cross in the crotch. My God, you'd have to like—come on, people make a big deal about Marilyn Manson. They'd never make a movie with a cross going up inside some young girl.

It's really sad that society has gone this way.
Yeah, so many films are so puritanical; it's sort of a 50s throwback.

I wonder why it came back.
I know, after such crazy times.

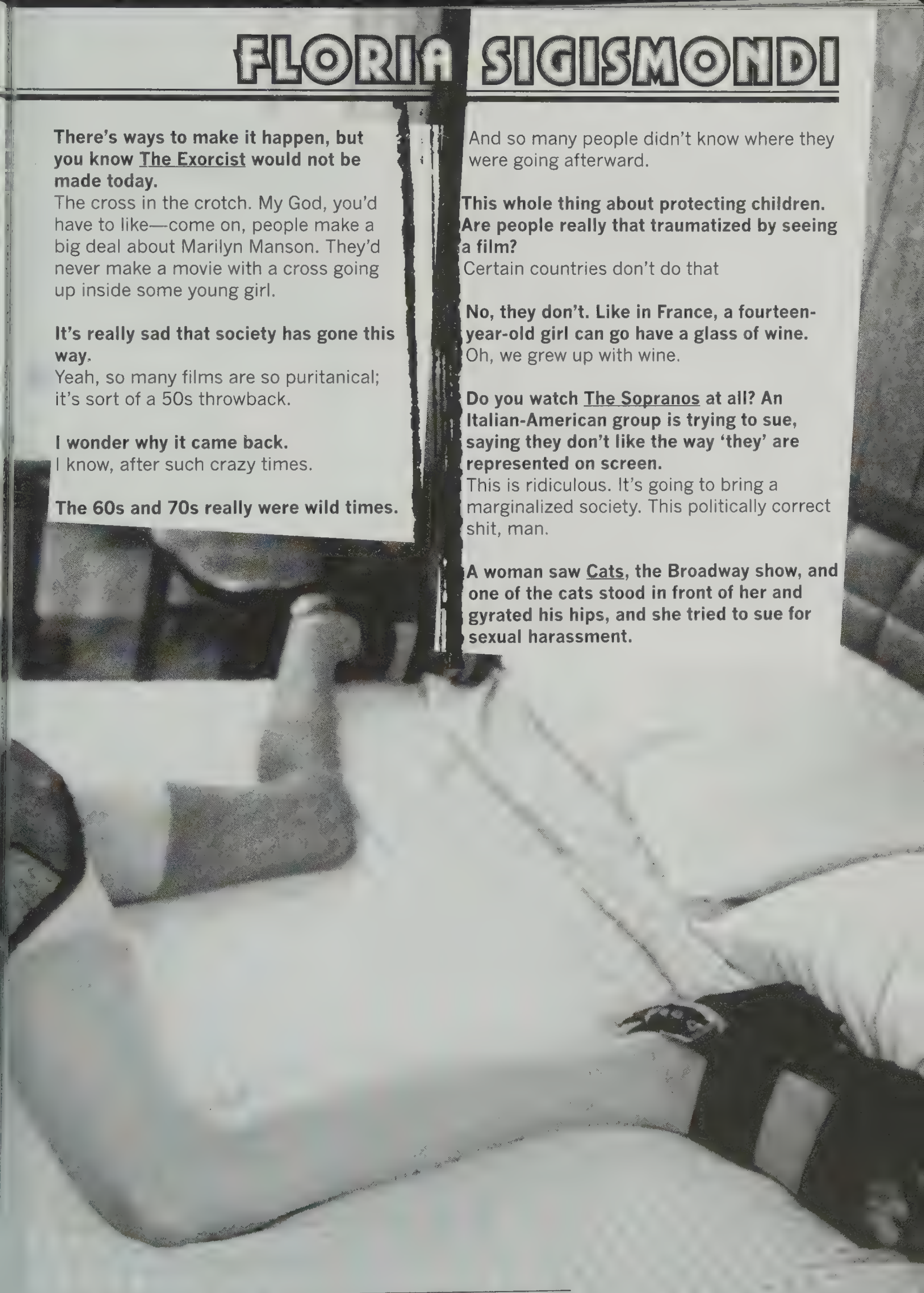
The 60s and 70s really were wild times.
And so many people didn't know where they were going afterward.

This whole thing about protecting children. Are people really that traumatized by seeing a film?
Certain countries don't do that

No, they don't. Like in France, a fourteen-year-old girl can go have a glass of wine.
Oh, we grew up with wine.

Do you watch The Sopranos at all? An Italian-American group is trying to sue, saying they don't like the way 'they' are represented on screen.
This is ridiculous. It's going to bring a marginalized society. This politically correct shit, man.

A woman saw Cats, the Broadway show, and one of the cats stood in front of her and gyrated his hips, and she tried to sue for sexual harassment.



Marilyn Manson curling his lashes in *Redemption.* Photo Floria Sigismondi.

Come on, that's daft. That's really fucked up. People get freaked out too easily. They see breasts, they get freaked out. Only not in a real sense, but in a performance setting. In a porno shop it's different. It's not necessarily categorized, is it? It has to be categorized. We're talking about life.

I've been stopped at the Canadian border for wearing spiky bracelets, but in Ontario it's legal for a woman to walk around without a top on. Canadian customs does some crazy things. They always want to point to the 'weirdos'. They think we make magic potions. We're witches to them.

That's why people are afraid to do what they want or look 'different', because they're going to be branded. And probably why they get pointed to so much—out of jealousy. So not everybody does what they really want to do, and that extends into your art and your career and who you are. Unless you're prepared to say, "I want to be hit with shit," then why do it?

And so everybody doesn't do what they really want to do, and that goes into art and into career, to the way they look, to what they do, and all of a sudden you get these repressed people.

Those are the people I'm fucking afraid of. I'm not afraid of people who walk around and saying, "This is who I am." I'm afraid of the other people.

Have you ever had any problems with censorship?

The English market had me edit the Marilyn Manson video for Tourniquet. I felt I went as far as I could without offending people, but they still had me make edits before it ran.

Marilyn Manson and Twiggy Ramirez, from *Redemption*. Photo Floria Sigismondi.

FLORIA SIGISMONDI

I think it's a feeling they had, seeing Manson against that wall.
It's about feelings.

I think that people really will feel like that: "I'm trapped in the corner, and I'm scratching myself on the wall." And see that feeling that they want to avoid.
I did a TED conference, a week-long lecture series with people from all different avenues of Technology, Entertainment and Design. Scientists involved in cloning, and musicians and filmmakers, from Norman Jewison and Atom Egoyan to the brilliant architect Frank Gehry; it was a fantastic experience.

When I presented my talk, this woman was really offended by my material. Here we were surrounded by these forward-thinking amazing people, and I wondered what was she was doing there. She was looking at the work, but not seeing it.

There is a difference between looking and seeing. The imagery she was opposed to was exactly what it was about. She apparently worked for abused mothers. The imagery came directly from a docu-video that I did that was about a woman's father beating her up. It was about a woman who can't move. In my image, the woman is actually able to move, but she can't; she's tied to herself. And I think this woman saw herself in the image and was afraid to confront this.

Twin Beds, Post Exhibition. Photo: Floria Sigismondi

It's like someone who is totally in charge of their life, but lives with someone who totally dictates their life: who their friends are, how late they can stay out, what they can watch. It's an overcompensation sort of thing. And I bet in their own minds it is some sort of game.

I think it's balance. Sometimes people are put in conflict positions. They like to be told. Because they're constantly making decisions and sometimes they just feel like being pushed around.

I have a friend who knows this dominatrix in London. She was hired by this surgeon; he wanted to be tied in this chair. He gave her very specific instructions: she'd have to cut him exactly how he told her. So he wouldn't die, but he would bleed; he would just sit there and bleed. That's how he had sex. These guys, they're very complex.

You know what it is, I think it is an overcompensating thing. It's something [illegible] re hiding [illegible] underdevelop a [illegible] ms.

I think when people [illegible] that way, and this woman [illegible] way, there's something in them that [illegible] getting triggered by seeing these im[illegible]. And it's something that they're [illegible] of.

But [illegible] you going to show people how [illegible]? A lot of times people want to [illegible] and I'm always saying, "I'm sorry, but [illegible] out there." If you don't look at it, it's not going to go away anyway.

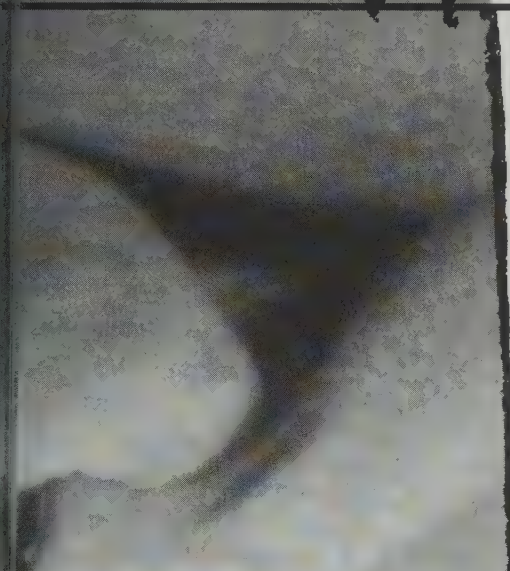
Our feelings are another sense, like touching or hearing, but in our society we're told that feelings are wrong, so this sense, and sense of self, is hidden. When artists bring up images that portray these feelings that are kept in, then it's just "No, no, no." Because people have no clue how to deal with their feelings.

Then they compensate by over-intellectualizing things and trying to completely bury their feelings. Surviving and feeling and dying.

It looks like you enjoyed your visit to the Mütter Museum.

Yeah, and actually I was going to mention this, because you were talking about African women augmenting their necks and stretching their necks. She showed me a foot, a bound foot, just in the closet. It was great, with all these little drawers, and there was this bound foot. Severed, because it had fallen off, got gangrene.

Main image: From 'Come Part Mortal' by Floria Sigismondi.
Inset: Floria's sister [illegible]



She had this great story about this woman who had traveled so far and her foot fell off, because of bad blood circulation. The foot is bent into a shape where this part blends right into that part. It becomes almost one piece. It looked like it was carved out of film.

It's a human foot that's curled on itself from top to bottom?
It's bound, literally, to create that shape. Initially they did it so the women wouldn't run when the men went off to war. And then it became a sort of thing of beauty, and all the women wanted to do it.

This woman's foot fell off. The whole thing did. I just saw it there. And how does she travel miles and miles to bring it to the doctor and tell him "Can you put this back on?" and sit there, and have her foot put back on? It completely got gangrene and they finally had to chop off her leg or something.

But it is something when we get used to something like that. It's created for keeping these women from running away, and people cope with it by, internally, turning it into something that sort of becomes beauty, just to cope with it. That's another way of coping with something that's so fucked up.

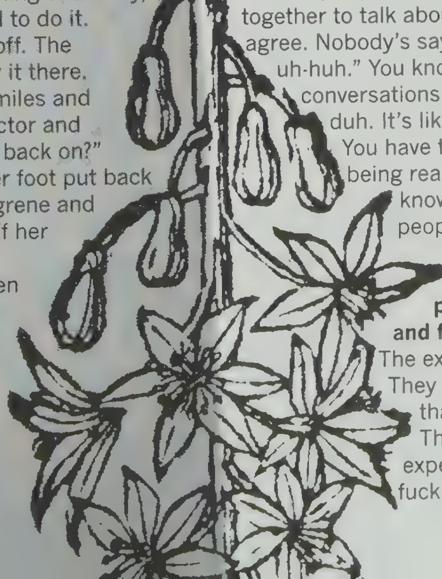
You have some sketches in the back of Redemption. Are these for you, or for the people that need to bring your images to life?
Sometimes I see things clearer than other times and I sometimes I sketch them out. If it's just like images, like vignettes, I use the sketches to spit out my images. I work them out on paper. Then I can show what I'm thinking and feeling about the project.

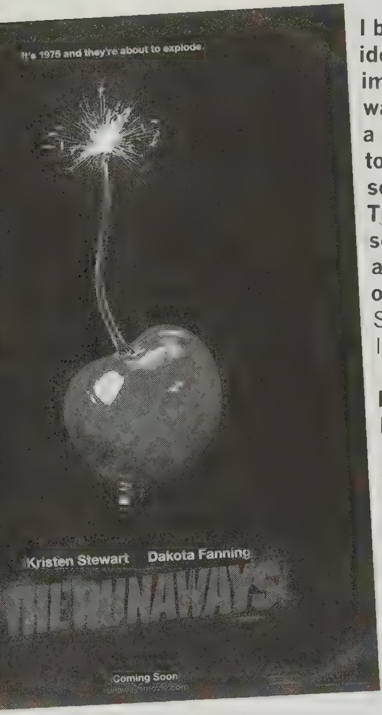
When I first started I didn't know how to communicate. I was a very shy, quiet person who rarely spoke. Then all of a sudden I had to deal with all these people.

I would show up and none of it would be what I wanted and I had to learn how to communicate. I've found the more particular and precise I am the better.

When I was younger, I hoped that evolution would be mostly mind-related. That the mind would continue to grow, and we would have more understanding and less miscommunication. The whole internet thing is interesting. I do use it to get in touch with more people. But it's also more insular, because all that communication happens alone at home.
Television did that, and now with the internet, it's worse. After work, people get together to talk about shit. You don't have to agree. Nobody's saying "Oh, yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh." You know they have fucking conversations like duh duh duh duh duh. It's like there's no appeal. You have to agree, and talk about being really nice, and nobody knows how to really be with people.

I think people watch people on TV sitcoms and feel that's normal.
The experience that's credible. They get confused now that that's the credibility there. There isn't. They're not experiencing, they're being fucking spit on.

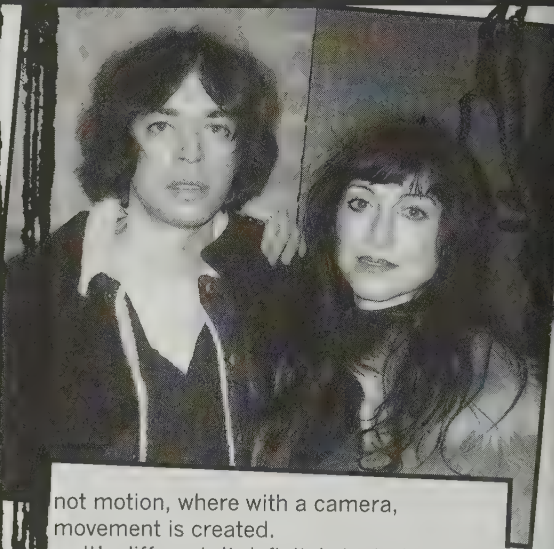




I believe the idea of seeing imagery and watching a movie is to reflect something. That we can see something about ourselves. Something like that.

People bitch about entertainers for changing their style, but it seems that's the only way you grow, is to change. Being the artist in that, you become a parody of yourself if you stay there. But that's difficult anyway, so you end up being a cartoon character.

I feel your work is something you can really walk into. With Martine and the water in the Tricky video, I want to go into the water. There's a space that's created, that can be moved into. Even if it is a tree and a hallway, there's space involved there. And with the colors, it's a whole world. On a stage, it's static; it doesn't move, actually. Pieces can move, but it's not motion, where with a camera, movement is created.

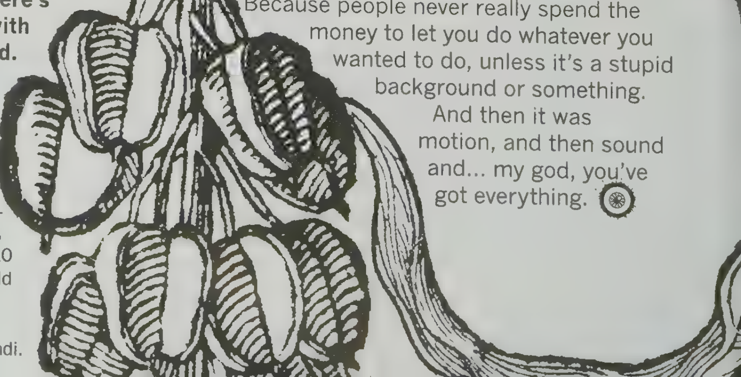


It's different. It definitely is. In fact the online-only Flash work that I did for Björk is quite a different piece.

I kept wanting it to do more. You can make the little lights move around a little bit. And you can make her spin around. I know, but it's challenging. You're dealing with words that have to get stuck into film.

I was dealing with something that's sort of photography, but it can only be this size, because of the amount of memory available for people who click in. It was different, challenging.

The really cool thing about actual film is the addition of sound to create space. That's what I love. When I first got into film, it was for me the thing that encompassed everything. The set design and the environment. Because I was a little bit held back with photography. Because people never really spend the money to let you do whatever you wanted to do, unless it's a stupid background or something. And then it was motion, and then sound and... my god, you've got everything. ◉



This page: Floria with her husband, composer Lillian Berlin, at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival for the world premiere of *The Runaways*. Photo Rodrigo Gudiño. Next page: From *Redemption*. Photo Floria Sigismondi.

DENNIS COOPER

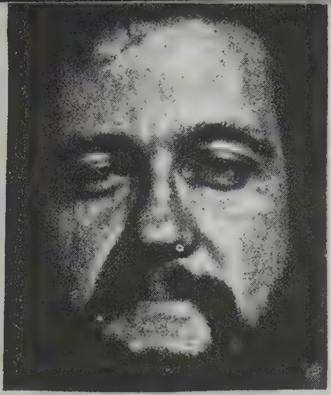
(age 12)

If ever a mental pathway was created by another man's work it would be that of Dennis Cooper. I was alerted to Dennis' literary presence by good friend and housemate Key Ransone of Small Cruel Party, who unfolded a handwritten letter from the author, disclosing a photocopy of a young boy with his head beaten in on the ~~blank~~ other side. A door was opened. Frisk was given as a gift. The light shone.

While Frisk is a grand introduction to Dennis Cooper and an undeniable delight, Dennis must venture forth as an artist and grow and form anew. Each immersion of literary form and emotive storytelling power sparkles with intricate tendrils of word-pulsed pleasure. A refreshing conversation ensues...

Images courtesy Dennis Cooper

dent de Curval



The Duc de Blangis

The Bishop of X

Giton, 12.
to the King, Son of a
man from the Nivernais)

Zelamir, 13.
(son of a Poitou squire)

Celadon, 14.
(son of a Nancy magistrate)

rcisse, 12.
a nobleman situated in
knight of Malta)

Adonis, 15.
(son of a judge
of a Paris assize
court, destined
for Curval)

Cupidon, 13.
(son of a gentle-
man from near
La Fleche)

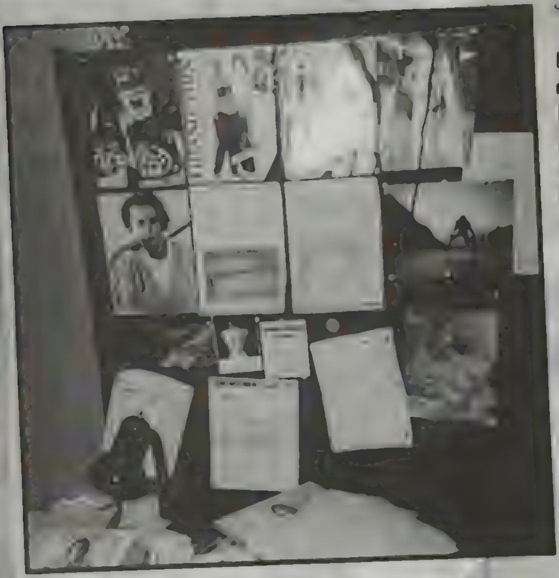
Zephyr, 15.
(son of a general
living in Paris, he
is generally con-
sidered the most
beautiful Destined
for the Duc)

Hyacinthe, 14.
(son of a retired
officer dwelling
in Champagne)

SHADE RUPE: So, we're at the end of a long cycle and a little bit of a loose thread too.
DENNIS COOPER: What a way to put it. How very Dianne Sawyer of you.

Have you thought about publishing all five novels as one big book?
I'd like for something like that to happen. Or have them all sport uniform covers and it be indicated that they're part of a cycle.

All of that stuff is very economic. I've already asked Grove if they would do the latter. And they were like, "it has to make sense, we have to wait a while." They're gonna do whatever will make money for them. If they did the five novels in one book I guess I'd like that the best. But if they can make more money with it in five they'll keep it like that.



Dennis Cooper's desk, 1988. Courtesy Dennis Cooper.

Do they have world rights or do they publish an English edition and it's sold all over the world?
They have the world rights to everything they have. Whenever those books sell overseas the money goes through them. Most of those books are published in Europe. My Loose Thread isn't through them though, it's through Canongate in Scotland.

Are you that much of a moneymaker for them in America?
No, gawd no. I'm published in tons of countries and I do pretty well in other places. That's how they make money on me.

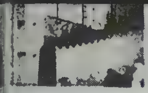
In France they've published five books by me in French. They're doing Frisk now. In Italy they've published three or four of my novels in Italian. My novels are published in something like eleven different countries so far.

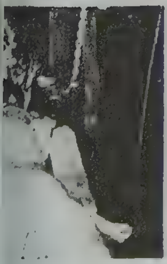
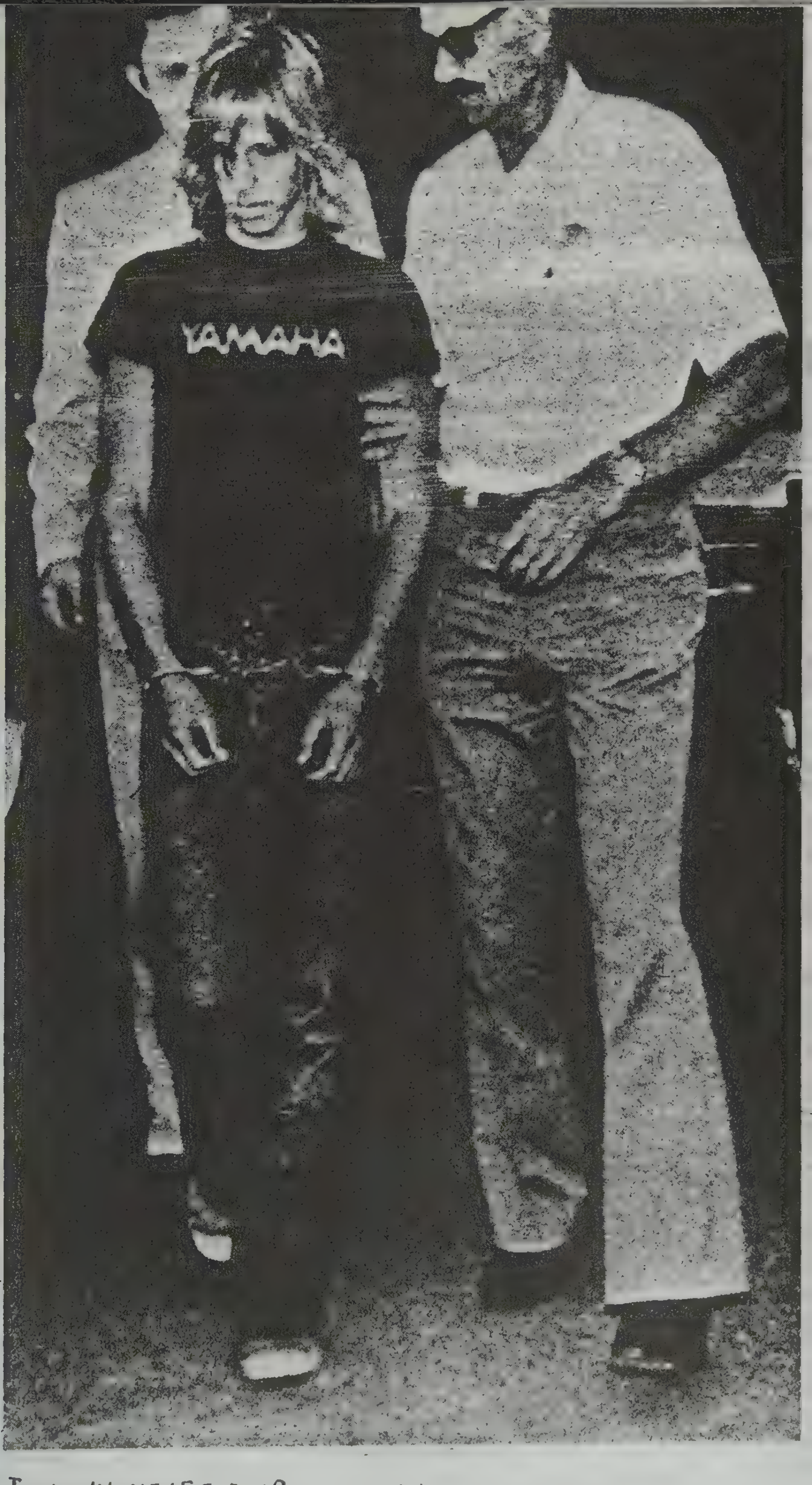
Do you get people to translate the reviews for you?
I wish I did. Sometimes when they're in French or German I have friends who can do that for me. I just have packets of reviews from all over, I don't know if they're positive or negative or what.

You're definitely an American writer, writing about very American things, in a very American way. Are they looking at America when discussing your writing or looking at their own teenagers?
Everywhere outside of America, including England, they see it as a critique of American culture, which it is. It's not really my intention but since I don't put the blame on the people in my books I put the blame on the world. People tend to relate to my books pretty intensely in some way or another without that too. When I was in France some people were interested in my work for its representation of America or pop culture in America but most of them are just into it. A lot of people just get into it without that.

You mention Pierre Buisson from All of Me.
I'm a big Cadinot fan, I just saw Double en Jeu, it's his best one in a while. His stuff from the late 80s is really good. The new one they just put out is pretty good. It's the best one I've seen in a while. The guy who translated my book said he was going to try

Right, and other artwork in this chapter by Dennis Coope
Collages from the collection of Aspen Michael Taylor



TIMOTHY NEWFIELD, 18, IS LED BY HIS SMIRKING CAPTORS INTO THE TORTURE CHAMBER. SEE PHOTOS AT LEFT.

to track down Pierre Buisson for me but last I heard, I read an interview with Cadinot, and he said that Pierre Buisson had turned into a big, bad junkie and that he's not working with him. I don't even know if he's still alive.

I dropped by the French Art store when I was in Paris.
I have an idea that I'd love to do a collaboration with him. I do really like his films. They're very into the ass, which I really like. Very well-done porn. It's really great.

I've seen some other French porn that has an intensity that characterizes it as French, but Cadinot is like an artist. You can see in some of his films that he references French theory and Baudrillard and shit like that. Clearly he knows what he's doing.

His actors always seem fine. Like things are cool and they're not abused during the making of the film.
Seemingly. You can't really know. It'll be interesting to know what happened to his actors. They could all be dead.

Reviews of your writing focus on the death and murder and they're missing all this other commentary that's going on.
Yeah, well there's not much you can do about that. People just really don't want to think about that stuff and they have these really rigid preconceptions about it. I've learned that over the years. You can undercut it, you can do anything you want to it but they're still gonna react to it like, Oh this is shocking and this guy's trying to shock me, and it doesn't matter what you say or what you do. They're still gonna have that.

The only other way to do it is to wuss out and not really go for it and not really try to understand it full force. I can't see the point of doing that. Then you end up like A.M. Homes or some boring person like that who tries to have these quasi-like-explorations of the taboo, which is completely boring.

Or be tremendously famous.
I suppose, although it is difficult to become tremendously famous with that material unless you're a horror filmmaker. Or write like Stephen King or something.

To destroy the evil in Stephen King's It all the boys get together and fuck the thirteen-year-old girl. I always wondered how he could get away with that.
Because in that context you can.

You grew up in Pasadena?
Arcadia. It's like a block from Pasadena so I might as well have grown up in Pasadena. Arcadia is a little suburb next to Pasadena.

When you did realize you were attracted to other men?
Gosh, I always did. I never really had any problem with it. I don't know exactly when. It was always just clear to me.

So it wasn't a problem.

It wasn't a problem for me. I just didn't give a fuck, I guess. I grew up in this particular time—it was like the late 60s when I was a young teenager. Even though it was a pretty heterosexual phenomenon, the whole hippie thing, it wasn't like I felt ostracized.

I went to this private boys school and one of the teachers was gay. I've never been a normal gay guy anyway so I never really related to gay guys or gay culture even when I was really young. I felt ostracized in general. I was just quiet. I had my friends and people who I could relate to and who were like me and interested in the things I was interested in but it wasn't like I was interested in being openly 'gay'.

Everybody knew I was but the whole point of being 'gay' never interested me.

I had punk rock and so it was like, fuck everything, I'm going to do what I want to do.

There was a lot of hanky panky at my school between students and teachers. There was a lot of stuff going on. I had psychedelic music instead of punk music, I guess.

What was the deal with getting hit in the head with an axe?

Well, when I was eleven years old, I was hit on the head with an axe and almost died. There used to be and may still be these things kids do called dirt clod wars. You dig up these hard, kind of rock-like chunks of dirt and throw them at other kids. My friends and I had a gang and there was a rival gang in the neighborhood, and we'd have these little wars. Our gang had a kind of fort in the bushes in front of our house, and one day we dug a pit to store our dirt clods. I couldn't find a shovel, so we used an axe instead.

A friend of mine was chopping a hole in the ground with the axe, and I unthinkingly crawled out of the bushes directly into his line of fire and the axe went right into the top of my head. I was knocked unconscious, and my friends freaked out and took off running and left me there. At some point I woke up, and there was blood just erupting out of my head. I got up and ran to our front door screaming, and I was rushed to the hospital. The only reason I wasn't killed was because my friend saw me at the last second and eased up slightly. Otherwise, my head would have been chopped in two or something.

Still, it was really serious and I was out of school for months in incredible pain, and I still have a big dent in the top of my head. I've often wondered if being the victim of such extreme violence in some way influenced my particular kind of interest in that kind of thing. I don't know, but I guess it would make sense.

What's weird is that before that incident I was a really good student at school, and after that I just didn't care anymore. I changed from being a shy, smart kid into a more outsider kind of kid.

Had you started writing before the age of sixteen?

I always wrote. When I was fifteen, it was my big year. I decided I wanted to be a great writer. I was known at my school for being a writer. I wrote these parodies. I'd take a TV show that was popular like The Monkees and I'd put all the teachers and the students in it and write this parody and then I'd read it at the school assembly.

But then when I was fifteen I started reading serious literature and stopped reading novelizations of Get Smart or whatever I was reading before that. So then I started writing seriously. It's always been who I was.

I drew pictures and was in a few rock bands and dabbled with making films in college, but mostly I always wrote.

Were you sending anything out to be published?

Not at that age. I've always been interested in writing about pretty extreme things. I was interested in developing this whole aesthetic. I started reading Sade when I was fifteen. So this whole thing was pretty private for me. I wrote stuff that I showed other people, but then I was also writing all this stuff in private. It wasn't like I ever thought about sending that stuff out.

I didn't really send stuff out until around 1973. When I was in college I started sending poems to magazines. I started working on poems at some point. There were avenues to publish poems. This whole gay poetry thing was a big thing when I was in college so there were all these gay poetry magazines. So I started writing a bunch of gay poems and publishing them in there. But I didn't publish any fiction anywhere for a really long time.

Did you have friends that you could talk with about liking extreme stuff or being interested in violent scenarios?
To some degree. There was a gang of people when I was in high school that were very like intellectual artsy people. We had a band together and a couple were musicians and they were artists and stuff. They were interested in that stuff, but I'm not sure they were as interested in it as I was. But there were people I could talk to about it, like my friend George Miles, who ended up being my big muse. I'd talk to him about it. I was almost always more interested in it than they were. But they could be really objective about it. They didn't think I was gross to be interested in it. But I didn't really show them my writing or anything. I just wanted to keep it to myself. They knew I was interested in serial killers and stuff.

So you didn't have other friends like in your books that would casually discuss killing people?
That was just made up.

I grew up in a place with a lot of rich kids. We all related to Less Than Zero. In my high school we would wonder who would kill themselves that year.
There was a lot of that kind of stuff when I was growing up too. People in my school died or killed themselves or overdosed on drugs. There was no mass murderer of teenage boys that I knew. I knew people like that later...

Had you found other things that seemed to be somewhat saying things you were interested in, describing things you were thinking?
Well, the big ones were Rimbaud and Sade. I was really interested in music. I also found it in music. The Velvet Underground and stuff like that. There was that too. And I guess probably movies to some degree. Among writers, they were the first two who hit me hard. I read all those French guys like Baudelaire and Lautremont. I was really into all that stuff. The two that were really huge, like knock me over the head like stuff, were Rimbaud and Sade.

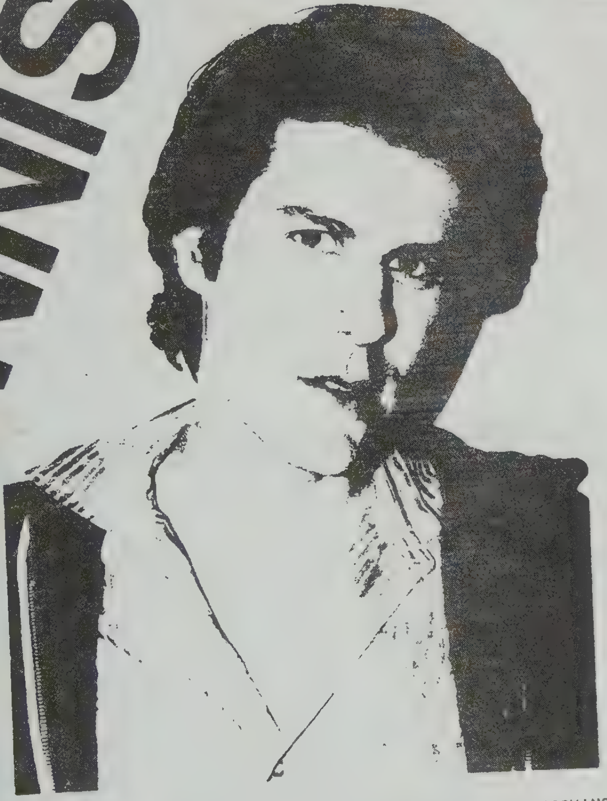
There was nothing really contemporary.
I read current stuff. I read Pynchon and John Barth and I read all that stuff that was out, and I liked it, I did.

But that wasn't describing this extreme interest. There was no sexual violence.
It didn't matter to me. I didn't really need to learn about that. I was figuring that out on my own. I was more interested in picking up technique. Those kinds of writers were helpful to me because they taught me about experiments that I wanted to do. I wasn't looking for the validation in terms of my interests. I was more looking how to write complexly or something. There was Burroughs too. I liked Burroughs when I was young, but not as much as people assume I did.

I feel very lucky that I was able to grow up with your writing. I used to have to find stuff that I could only draw my own things from, like true crime books, or extreme sexual underground material, or more marginal stuff. And then I found Frisk, a book from a large publisher.
Sade was like that for me I suppose. I was fascinated by a bunch of stuff. When I was thirteen there were these three boys that were found raped and tortured and killed in the hills behind my house. It was in the newspaper. I was absolutely fascinated by it. I couldn't believe it. I didn't know why I was fascinated, but I was just obsessed about it. I tried to talk to all my friends about it, and they were like, god, yuck!

I finally found a friend to go with me up to the mountains to find where they'd been killed. We spent most of a day trying to find the exact spot. Eventually, we found some police tape and an area that had clearly been heavily trampled, and I figured that must be it. So we set up a tent and camped there overnight. I don't remember much about it apart from just looking around and imagining what the murders would have been like and looked like. I looked for souvenirs and didn't

DENNIS COOPER



POET, AUTHOR OF TIGER BEAT, ANTOINE MONNIER AND THE FORTHCOMING IDOLS

EDITOR OF LITTLE CAESAR MAGAZINE AND PRESS

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find anything, although I think I took some police tape and some rocks or something. It was heavy to me, but I don't think there was anything particularly mystical about the place or anything.

Anyway, all that made me realize that it was a really weird thing that I was so interested in those murders. The victims were people who were my age, you know. Sade was important because he legitimized my interest in those things.

When did you start thinking you needed to work out these thoughts through writing?
I think from about fifteen. But it took me a really really long time to figure out how to do it. I wrote all these poems and everything and the poems were all right. I didn't feel the poems were getting at what I really wanted to get at. I wrote all this stuff that I threw away and I didn't end up using, just trying different things out. I always wanted to do some kind of series or cycle.

There was a certain point when I realized that I could write about sexual violence, and also at the same time write about George Miles, and put him in opposition with that. That kinda became the key to me. Because if it was George then I could protect him, and I wouldn't let anyone hurt him, and all this stuff. I also wanted to explore my whole relationship with him. That helped. Before that, I couldn't figure about how to do it without being cruel.

I'm not really a cruel, sadistic person. My work's not about sadism at all. That's what really was the key, when I decided I was going to write about George and that at the same time.

How did you guys get out of touch?
We were really really close. I met him when I was fourteen or fifteen and he was twelve. We got really attached 'cause he'd taken LSD and his brother had asked me to help him get down off LSD because I had taken a lot of LSD. We just got really close. We ended up in this band together. When he got into high school he started to have developmental problems—deep psychological problems. I basically think he was manic depressive.

Our relationship got kind of strange at that point anyway because he was really seriously disturbed. I don't know how that came on to him but it did. He would be like really catatonic with depression or he'd be like really manic. His parents had always thought of me as a really bad guy because George and I were so close and just because I was older, but at that point they began to really rely on me because no one else could put up with George. But they would always call me up and say, Would you come see George? or, Would you call George?

Our relationship got really intense during that period. He tried to kill himself. He went into cults. He became a christian. He tried everything to get himself together. We'd always had this whole, very intentional relationship. Never sexual, but very much about love. We talked about whether we were in love and should sleep together. It was always an issue about whether we were in love or all this stuff.

It became more and more complicated because he was so fucked up and I would take care of him, dah dah dah. We would be really close and he would just disappear and then we'd get back in touch. This went on for years and years and then in the early 80s we had a kind of relationship finally. He was a lot better. He was on antidepressants and he was doing a lot better. He had a girlfriend. It wasn't like we were primary boyfriends or anything. We finally did this thing we had always wanted to do.

But then I moved to New York and he was in college and we talked and I saw him a couple of times when I came back to visit. And then I moved to Amsterdam. When I was in Amsterdam I didn't have a phone or anything and there was no internet back then. I kinda fell out of touch with everybody.

But right before I moved to New York from L.A. I said, Look, I'm going to write these books about you, and I had to explain the whole thing to him, Is that all right? And he said, Yeah. I went over to Amsterdam and started working on Closer.

I moved back to New York in 1987, and I tried to get in touch with him. I wrote the books and I tried to get in touch with him once or twice a year but I couldn't find him. His parents had moved. I turns out he killed himself while I was in Amsterdam. I didn't know until 1997, ten years after he killed himself. I really regret us falling out of touch obviously because I feel like I could've made a difference.

Did he leave anything behind of him in a similar way that you left something for him in the way of the books?
I have stuff of his. Some of it's in my archives. I have some stuff I'll be sending to Fales Library at New York University. I kept everything he ever gave me or made for me. When I found out he died I went into this tailspin about it. I didn't know how he died. I just heard really indirectly.

How did you find this out?
It was really weird. This friend of mine was in AA and he said to me, It's really weird, this guy stood up the other night testifying, or whatever they do at AA meetings, and he said he had this friend George Miles who had killed himself and this had been this big heavy thing for him. I said, God, can you get me in touch with the guy. So I talked to him and I realized when I talked to him it was the same George.

I tried to find out where he was buried and all this stuff. I finally found his mom and I talked to her and that was really heavy. She said, You should come see me. I've been putting it off 'cause she might even be so old she's probably dead now. I have a standing plan to go see her 'cause she has a lot of stuff. George kept everything I gave him. She said they have on the wall a framed poem I wrote for him when I was about sixteen.

But it's so heavy for me, it's sort of hard to deal with. I have stuff he left for me and I'd love to go see what she has of his. I have thoughts of writing a non-fiction book about him, but, you know...

I would assume it was painful even at the time when he would get depressed when you were together.
It was tough. You know when someone's that fucked up the joy goes out of it. It really was like taking care of him. He'd be really great and fun and then he'd just be a complete mess. It's not much fun to sit around... he'd be lying in bed like catatonic practically he was so depressed, and I'd sit there for hours and hours and hours with him. Or I'd go out with him and he'd be so manic he'd drive me insane. I really loved the guy. He was a brilliant guy.

Did you ever feel it was your job to take care of him?
No, no, no. I felt a lot of responsibility. There were times I kinda wanted to bail on it. And I'd bail on it for brief periods. I'd always go back and hang out with him. He was a whole lot better in the early 80s. I guess he went into a tailspin after that; I guess he went off his medication.

His girlfriend was a DJ at a radio station. She dumped him and he called in a bomb threat to the station to get back at her and she had him arrested. He was down in L.A. awaiting trial and that's when he killed himself. His mom said his father wouldn't pay for his medication. There's some whole thing about how she blames the father for it. It was before they even called it bipolar.

I think if he lived longer he would've been fine. I don't think they knew how to treat it. I don't think they really knew what was really wrong with him. Now it seems very clear. But at the time it was, Why is he being so weird? Why was he being like this? It was completely confusing.

Do you feel medications were the only thing that would help him?
He tried everything. He really did try everything. He tried religion. He tried drugs. He got involved with this girl. He tried everything he could think of to feel better. He was deeply fucked up. He killed himself. He blew his head off with a shotgun in his mom's house. He was pretty unhappy.

Heroin is so normal in Seattle. I'd think about saying something to people who were doing a lot, wouldn't, and then they'd OD.
I spent years and years taking care of fucked-up people after that. I sort of finally realized there really was no point to it. It didn't help. It just made it worse.

It's such a great realization to finally realize you can't fucking change people.
It's hard though. People like that are really fascinating. I'm very drawn to people like that. They remind me of him too. Like the people in my books. Everybody always looks like him. Everyone I've been boyfriends with has looked like him.

You're almost fifty now, yet you are consistently able to capture the voice of young people today. I guess you're still getting a lot of emails from young people today.
I have a lot of young fans. I have a lot of young friends. I'm really weird because I'm really like a young person. I don't feel like an adult at all. I know people always say that, but most of my friends are younger than me. I just feel comfortable with them. I go see bands and I'm interested in the same stuff these people are. Most people my own age aren't interested in that kind of stuff anymore.

I have a lot of young fans and I do get a lot of letters and emails and stuff like that. But it's not like I have to try. I kind of talk like that anyway. I'm from California. The voice of my books is a refinement of my own voice. With My Loose Thread I did some research and kinda based that high-school shooter character's voice on Kip Kinkel's voice.

It's great hearing you read live because you really get a great realistic voice for your characters. You really peg it.
Well, I wrote them! People always think that I'm going to read something confrontational. But the best way to read that stuff is to read it really quietly. It's much more powerful that way. It's more true, rather than throwing your arms around and shit.

I rarely feel that I'm being attacked by the writer in your books. The closest I could think would be Frisk.
Each of the books concentrates on a different part of the body. Frisk is the libido. Try is the

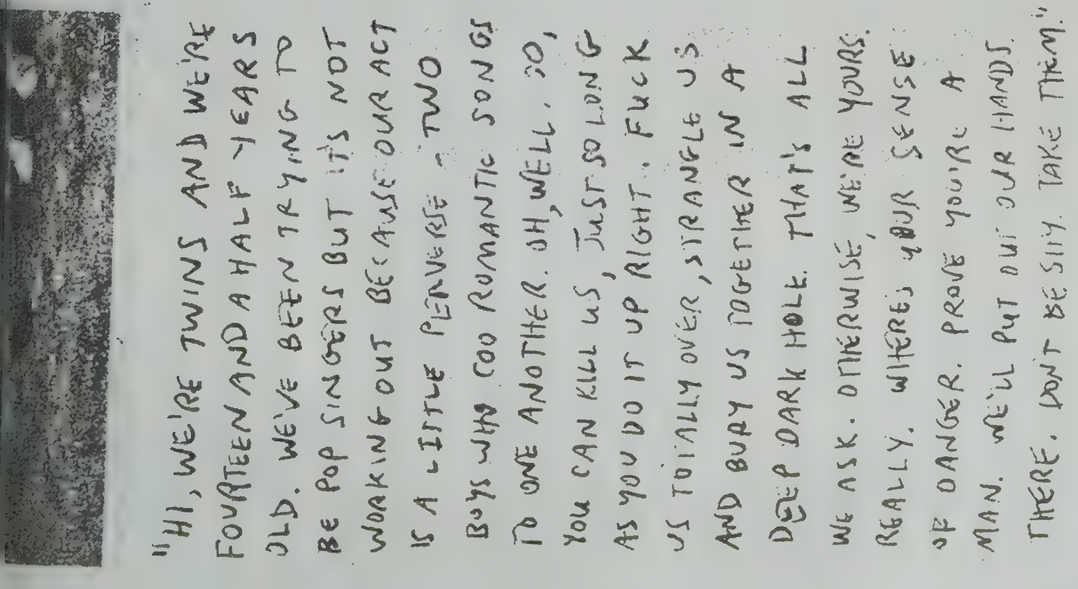
heart. Guide is the mind. I felt I had to go that far in Frisk. It's pornographic. I wanted to make it pornographic. But I don't think it's shocking. I think it's erotic. I think it's disturbing because it's erotic. But I'm totally not into shock.

I don't know why people compare you to Burroughs. I don't see it.
They're lazy.

I think it's a defense mechanism, a way to cope with the material.
The Lovely Bones is about this raped and murdered child. It's this big hit book of the year.

Mysteries, big horror, even Steven Spielberg can show all sorts of murder and mutilation and it's all okay. It's totally normal and human to think about killing someone.
There's just no encouragement to do it in art. You don't get much support for it. It's completely bizarre to me when I read those things like, "Dennis Cooper is the most dangerous writer in America." I'm like, Wow, that's a really sad statement. That's just because I do what I do. It's so ridiculous. It's unfortunately true. There are very few people that have stuck their nose in mainstream publishing that do anything really radical. I don't understand why that really is. I got lucky 'cause I got the gay fiction thing and the transgressive literature thing so I kind of got in the door. People send me stuff, and it's great stuff, but I don't know what to tell them. I don't know how they're going to get it published. It's really difficult.

People can become very moralistic. Even Larry Clark is very moralistic. That bothers me in his work. Why doesn't he just be honest with himself? I was just furious when I saw Bully. It was such bullshit. Another Day in Paradise has the most beautiful boy in the world in it, Vincent Kartheiser, so I appreciated that but other than that, his movies suck. The only good one was the one that Harmony wrote. Larry Clark bugs me. I'm also constantly compared to him. I think he's exploitative, moralistic and weird. His politics are so fucked up.



"HI, WE'RE TWINS AND WE'RE
FOURTEEN AND A HALF YEARS
OLD. WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO
BE POP SINGERS BUT IT'S NOT
WORKING OUT BECAUSE OUR ACT
IS A LITTLE PERVERSE. TWO
BOYS WHO COO ROMANTIC SONGS
TO ONE ANOTHER. OH, WELL. SO,
YOU CAN KILL US, JUST SO LONG
AS YOU DO IT UP RIGHT. FUCK
US TOTALLY OVER, STRANGLE US
AND BURY US TOGETHER IN A
DEEP DARK HOLE. THAT'S ALL
WE ASK. OTHERWISE, WE'RE YOURS.
REALLY. WHERE'S YOUR SENSE
OF DANGER. PROVE YOU'RE A
MAN. WE'LL PUT OUT OUR HANDS.
THERE. DON'T BE SILLY. TAKE THEM."

Something else people have to do to be comfortable. is this whole comparing thing. Why can't something just be?
That's marketing.

Frisk is the title that a lot of people associate with you. Did that book put you in a bigger light?
It certainly cemented my image. I don't know if it put me in a bigger light. It's been the bane of my existence. I'm certainly really proud of the book. It came out right after Jeffrey Dahmer was arrested. It came out right after American Psycho came out. It got caught up in this whole thing.

It's not like my bestselling book or anything. It's not my most popular book. But I've never been able to live it down. I think when people think of me they think of Frisk and they think I'm just this 'extreme' writer. I think what it did was just basically give people a way to characterize me and dismiss me or champion me, one or the other. I knew that was gonna happen. I was like, Oh god, I'm ruining my fucking career now by publishing this fucking book, but, what the hell! But it is weird to me though how that book had such a huge impact on the way people think about me.

I wonder how that grew. because obviously Marcus Hu felt like investing in a film. How did it get such a buzz? I remember when Try came out a few people I knew were complaining that it wasn't as good.
They do that with every one of my books. That's always really frustrating. It happens every single time. Try came out and people complained and now it's a big favorite. Then Guide came out and everybody was like, "Oh, this doesn't have any energy in it anymore, it's all blah blah blah." And now Guide's a lot of people's favorite. Period's the same thing, "What's all this postmodern bullshit?" and now people like Period. When people write to me Frisk is not the one that everybody really likes. I'm really happy with it. Contextually it probably is the most extreme book I've written. I think that's really good and stuff but I've got this thing I'm going to publish that's more extreme, but that's another issue...

It's just the zeitgeist too. It just came out at this moment when everybody was fascinated by this stuff and there was that whole transgressive downtown literature thing for about three years and everybody was interested in that.

There's not a Dennis character in Try.
Oh no. I have this whole structure to the book. Only in the second and fourth. Dennis is only in Frisk and Guide.

And Period.
No, he's not in there. That's another character.

But the email address...
Oh yeah, I know. That's a little clue. Not everybody picks that up.

How could you not pick that up? Nidsen?
That book is such a puzzle. It's so complexly organized. It really is like a puzzle.

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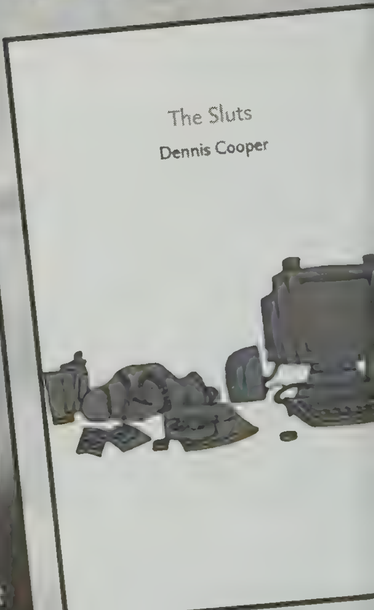
DENNIS COOPER



that you can solve. I just did that for fun. If somebody really wanted to solve the puzzle of this book then maybe someone would try writing to that address, and see what happens. And people did.

Because so much of Period is this mirror image thing, why not 'Sinned' for the email address?
I didn't want it to be about me. One of the ways that book works is that people whose names work backwards and forwards, become a name both ways, they are successful mirror images of themselves and so they work properly within the novel's system. They survive. People whose names cannot become mirror images don't survive, they die. I didn't want to get myself involved in that. The email address was thrown in there as a little side thing. I didn't want to put myself in there as part of that structure.

Did that actually begin as a 400-page manuscript? In your interview with Clive Barker in L.A. Weekly you mentioned a longer manuscript.
No, that was My Loose Thread. Period was tortuously written and it was always very small.

When I was at Fales Library at NYU I looked at the Try scrapbook, which was really great. It's miles better than any of the extras of the killer's journal on the Se7en DVD.
I do a scrapbook for each book I write. For

"Dennis Cooper, God help him, is a born writer"
WILLIAM BURROUGHS
My Loose Thread
Dennis Cooper

Original hardbound cover of My Loose Thread. Cover art by Sue de Beer

Period. It's all on disc and it's in this little mansion house and you open the top of the house to get to the scrapbook. There's all these weird sites that have all this fake snuff on it. Russian gay porn sites that have fake snuff pictures, which is part of Period too.

I think you would especially appreciate these two fetish sites because they're so ridiculous. They've stopped doing them now, but they had these images of boys killing each other, stabbing each other, fake blood. Really intense.

Do you ever cruise around the Yahoo groups?

I belong to a newsgroup and I see a lot of that stuff. I always search around and find that stuff, but I get so bored really fast.

Early on in the making of Frisk, I read an interview with the director and he said that the subject matter was too intense and he didn't know how to get near it, and I thought, Why the fuck is this guy making this movie?

It was such a long, horrible process. It ended up with Todd Verow because there were all these other people who were going to do it that were much more interesting and who would've done a much more interesting film than Todd did, but I think basically at the end of the day they decided they really should try to make some money. I think ultimately they just decided they wanted to make the most extreme queer movie ever made or whatever they thought it was gonna be. The novel got really lost.

They threw a girl in.

Yeah, I know. There was a point where I knew I was in deep shit with the movie. Todd was writing the script and they wouldn't show it to me. But they kept saying, "Todd's having some problems with this scene. Would you look at this little piece of his script to try to fix it for him?" So I would do that once in a while. I remember when I was looking at it and I was like, Oh boy, this doesn't look good.

There was one part where Todd had shot something and there's a line, a really important line in the book, where one of the characters says, "skin is stingy." And Todd Verow had shot it as "skin is stingy," like a bee sting. Marcus had said to me, "It's stingy, right, like a miser?" And

DENNIS COOPER

Dennis Cooper Wrong

I'm like, Yeah. "Well, Todd won't shoot it as 'stingy' because he doesn't think that makes any sense. He doesn't understand what that means. Would you please call him and explain to him what that means."

If he doesn't understand 'skin is stingy,' then he certainly isn't gonna understand anything, and then I'm lost. That's such a key thing. When they finally screened it for me like five days before they premiered it, I was just completely in shock! I was really upset. Then after the movie came out, I read this interview with Todd Verow where he said he thought I was a terrible writer and that the novel was a bunch of pretentious, badly written bullshit. So obviously I feel deeply betrayed by the producers. It was just an ugly experience in every way.

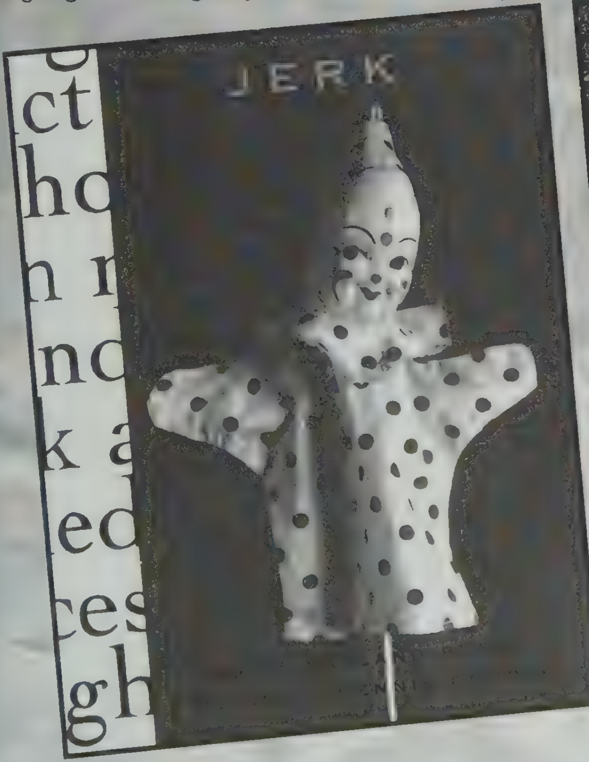
And Coil even did the soundtrack.

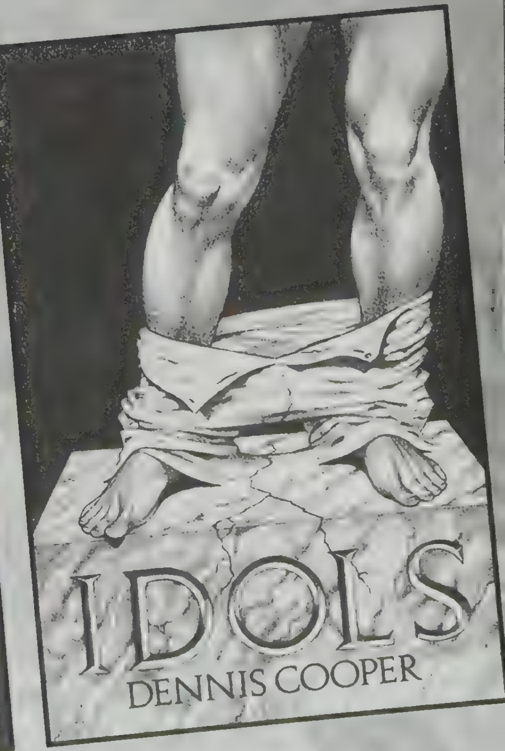
I felt so bad. They did it for me. Peter did it for me. Lee Ranaldo did it for me. I felt really bad about it. I don't think they really knew what they were getting into. Bob Mould was going to do it originally and I think he saw the script and said, "No fucking way am I gonna do this!" I feel bad that they put that much effort into such a piece of shit. It was really nice of them to do it. It's not like they got any money to do it or anything.

It's so normal for movies to get fucked up in the process of making them. Most filmmakers talk about how they have to deal with all these people who won't let them do their thing. They're not waking up in the morning saying, "Oh great! I'm going to make a piece of shit that everyone's going to hate."

John Waters is one of my best friends and the difficulty he has... I mean when he makes his movies he gets to make his movies, but the difficulty he has getting people to even let him make his movies. I mean he's fucking John Waters! It's really difficult to get those movies made. I just don't even understand it.

Is Horror Hospital happening as a film?





That movie... They don't really keep in touch. I get reports from them. It is still happening. Recently, not too long ago, I was like, Is that still happening? My agent made inquiries. It is still happening, they have a script. They think it's finally gonna happen. It's been really difficult. It took a long time to get a really good script. Raising money is tough. They keep optioning it. I know they've approached Daniel Johns of Silverchair to do the music and that would help it get made if that happened. I've never seen the script. I don't know anything about it. I hope it gets made. I think it's one of the few things I've written that would make a good movie.

Do you ever try to be involved in these film projects?

After Frisk, I'm very, very wary. With Horror Hospital I don't care because it's not that big a deal to me. I'm not particularly proud of it. It's fun or whatever. I'm very cautious now. I'm just really cautious about the whole thing. If somebody really interesting wanted to make something, of course I'd be into it. I wrote a movie that's supposedly going to get made. I actually wrote this movie for this director. That's a whole other thing.

People have wanted to do Try. They just couldn't do all that ass stuff. It happens once in a while. I'm kinda wary of getting into it again.

I think Try would be the closest to working well. I thought Try was more intense than Frisk. I think it could be made. It would be beautiful.

They'd never make it. There's too much ass stuff in it. You couldn't make it because it would get too compromised. If somebody really amazing wanted to do it, maybe they could do something with it. A lot of people were interested in Try, but they were like, I just can't do all that ass stuff.

It would almost have to be made in France, or Spain, or Japan.

Now that I'm getting pretty well known over there, I have a slight hope that people over there might want to make a film of it.

And Warm, the Carter Smith film?

There's a producer. Last I heard from Carter they were, oh yeah, let's get the money and do it this fall. But I haven't heard from them. I think it's really hard to raise money. If we shoot it the way it's done, it has hardcore pornography. I said, if you want to do it without the hardcore pornography, that's fine. It was written as a porn movie originally and I expanded it out to be like a feature film. One of these days Carter's gonna say, I'm shooting it. I'm not really involved in it. I did my rewrites. The producer who did You Can Count on Me signed on to produce it.

How did you find Carter?

He found me. He just contacted me through my agent initially and said, "Do you want to do a project together? Do you want to write a film for me?" He sent me his book to look at and I looked at it and thought it was pretty cool and so I said, let's meet, and I met him and really liked him. He said, "Yeah, I want you to write a porn movie."

He had this whole kinda interesting idea at the beginning. He wanted seven episodes, each one twenty minutes long, to be released on video as a serial, once at the end of each month, and at the end of each one there's a cliffhanger. He gave me all these rules. "I want it to be set in a rave scene in L.A. I want part of it to be set in Mexico. I want it to be an unrequited love story that works out at the end," blah blah blah. But then I guess he showed it to Christine Vachon. She really liked it and he asked me to expand it into a feature film. He just gave me some basic guidelines.

When he's in town I meet with him. He tells me the latest of what's going on. It's not a great genius movie or anything but it's pretty funny. It's got some nice stuff in it.

I like the other ways when you've worked with other people, what's materialized there. You've done some music stuff, you've done some art stuff.

I love doing that. I want to make a porn movie. I've been wanting to do that for a long time. I want to find someone to work with to make an actual porn movie. It would be like Cadinot or Man's Best. More like the porn I like, which is mostly European porn.

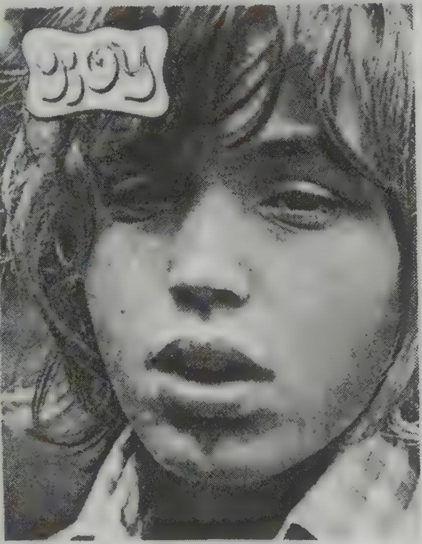
Have you been on many film sets? Do you know the process of making a movie?
Not really, but I don't know that I have to. I just need to find someone who knows how to work a camera and has a sense of direction. I don't think it's going to be that difficult. I want to work with someone who knows what they're doing. I'm not a director. I have no visual sense at all. I have ideas. I want it to have this quality. What if we did this, this, and this, and they can tell me, That won't have the effect you want. Someone who just knows how to use a camera. It would be like a collaboration. I'd just like to have some control over the way it's done.

Have you seen any of Wiktor Grodecki's movies?
Yeah, I've got Body Without Soul. The porn director in Body Without Soul was one of the directors for Man's Best, which are these Czech porn films I find really fascinating. I collected most of their early stuff. Man's Best films are really interesting. I've bought stuff from them online, but it's not the same company anymore. I'm not really interested in what they've been doing in the last six or seven years.

It's so easy to go back to Cadinot. Games of Paris, Carnival in Venice, that whole period is so incredible.
I like the one where the guy crashes and gets lost in the desert.

Yes, that's on DVD now! Chaleurs! Sex Oasis!
I really like his recent one. It's just like sex sex sex sex sex. Extreme anal sex. It's very intense. It's the most intense one he's done in a while. It's not as smart as All of

Kidnaped Boy Strangled
Autopsy Reveals



"The killer apparently offered the boy a ride home. Instead, the child was taken to an as-yet-undetermined location. He seems to have been tied up for several days. What ensued during this period can only be pieced together and speculated upon. The boy appears to have been well fed and kept clean, but there are signs of brutal and wide-ranging sexual misuse. Multiple bruises and deep cuts across the back and legs would seem to indicate numerous beatings with what may have been a coat hanger or electrical appliance cord. The neck is deeply bruised, as well as broken, presumably from the force of his strangulation. Teeth marks up to 1/4" deep cover the face, neck, upper arms, thighs and the buttocks. He had been savagely sodomized with a large instrument, possibly a man's hand and arm." —Official Detective, 1977.

Me or Becoming Men or any of those earlier ones, but it's pretty good. I was surprised it had a lot of force in it, a lot of intensity. It was pretty good. It's not bad. It's the best one I've seen in a while.

I liked the way you used the AOL chat to tell the story in Period. You included the reality of that kind of chat, with the broken question/response 'communication'. Those 'reality' bits like: Are you still there? Hello?
Yeah, yeah. Sure. You ask a question, and the person you're writing to is still answering your question before it.

You've mentioned that you felt the five-cycle work is a failure as far as trying to find out who you were. If you had not heard about George's passing, would Period have been a different book?
Yeah, it would've been a different book. It was always going to be about him because in the structure of the cycle he has to return. He transforms into all those other characters and he slowly transforms back. He appears in Guide. It wouldn't've been the same book. I was in terrible grief when I wrote that.

I wanted to write a magic trick form. It's like a magic trick. Yeah. You know what I mean? The things that influenced me like the web and video games are things I was thinking about when I was writing it, but it wouldn't've been built like that. I have this novel that I might end up publishing, this kind of phantom novel of the cycle, which maybe was gonna be Period. But it's completely different.

Period was totally shaped by this guilt and grief. It's wholly about George. And then he kills himself. That's basically what it's about.

I love it that the writer inside of the book has written a book about, and he's made, this art sculpture performance thing that you can go walk around inside of, and it's this black maze with this mirror. At the end of the story, it just all burns up. It's really intricate. It's wild. I remember reading it and going, I think there's a lot more going on here than what I'm reading is presenting to me.
You have to read it a few times. That book is the hardest I've ever worked on anything. It shocked me when that book came out and so many people just completely did not understand it. Or they thought it was so difficult. I keep getting that like, "Oh, Period was just so incomprehensible." I'm like, "Gawd! It's not incomprehensible! It's completely comprehensible!"

That's what's so shocking is that people are so unused to having something that's really experimental in fiction, they just didn't know what the fuck to do with it. They really were just like, I don't get it. I'm like, well, try! That book is no more complicated than a video game. It's not incomprehensible. That's just bizarre to me.

I wasn't sure if he's keeping a journal and writing down the times each time or if this is like an internet conversation.
The thing is, you don't have to make complete sense of it. There are a couple of reasons. One is that it gives you this sense that time is not going to move in a normal way. It signals to you that there are a lot of gaps in the book, because there's like all these spaces between the times that he writes.

The way that book works is it's all like pieces of sculpture. Those things match up with the internet dialog which match up with this and this. The book has this whole thing about forms of communication. So there's online chats, phone conversations, tape recorded conversations. It's just part of that system.

The book is more about making a perfect system. You don't have to understand every single tiny thing of it. You're just supposed to enjoy it. People who think they have to understand every tiny little thing for it to work... It all makes complete sense. Believe me, I worked really hard so it would make complete sense. You're just supposed to surrender to it.

Just let go, you know? I had just seen Lost Highway when I started working on that book. I was like, Man! Okay! You know? Just let it be. Just go with it.

These are the same people who talk about how great Burroughs is.

DENNIS COOPER

Cover of Tiger Beat, Little Caesar Press, 1978.
Courtesy Dennis Cooper.

But Burroughs is a comedian. It's comedy. So it's really different. And they don't read those books anyway. They don't.

They just pretend they have?
Yeah. It's just like, oh, Burroughs, cool. Or they just read the sex parts. Burroughs is like a stand-up comedian. His books are like riffs. They're not that difficult. I don't think Burroughs' work is complicated at all.

It's written very different from straight narrative though. I love your essays on Burroughs.
I'm still in deep shit about those. That James Grauerholz guy completely has this fucking vengeance against me because of them. I just reviewed The Brion Gysin Reader, and it sucks, I'm sorry. I hate to say it, but it does. I wrote a bad review in Bookforum. All these people were up in arms about it and writing letters and "How dare you attack Brion Gysin!" I'm just like, c'mon, man! We gotta sort this shit out, ya know?

Some people must have loved Period.
People do. For some people it's definitely their favorite one. It does have a real core following, that book. The only people who don't like it are the people who only like the early stuff. There's a whole bunch of people who only like Closer and Frisk. They don't like it. They think it's too complicated. I have no time for that. I'm just like, whatever.

You're still telling these really incredible stories with these incredible outsider characters. You're still offering these really crazy wild fun perspectives on everything.
It's a really bad time to publish what I'm doing right now. I don't care. I've always written for the future. When I was a kid, all the writers I loved were dead. In a way, I'm writing for when I'm gonna be dead. I have total faith that the work will stand up. Besides, people always come around later. They reject the book when it comes out and years later the same people talk about how great it is. I can't take it seriously.

Everyone seems to achieve higher regard when they're dead. There was this kid in my high school who was an asshole who killed himself, and after he was dead, People had all these photos like he was some kind of angel. Like Columbine. It was so obvious that some of those jock kids were fucking assholes. And they released doves to represent them at the ceremony.
Bowling for Columbine has this really beautiful footage from the surveillance cameras of them running around in the cafeteria. It's so fucking beautiful. Just really intense. There's this whole long sequence of it. I'd never seen it uncut before. It's cut into four frames and they do this thing with a spotlight effect. I hadn't seen it all in one piece before. I kinda like that Michael Moore guy. I think he's a good old lefty guy. That footage is really good.

I wonder if there was anything those kids could've found that would've said to them, Hey, it's okay to be kinda weird, or someone

outside of the school system who let them know that when they get out of school they'll be doing something cool, and the assholes will be digging ditches.

I found *Crash* and your books, de Sade, etc. and figured that 'fucked up' doesn't mean 'fucked up'. There's never gonna be any fixing of anything unless people will just fucking look at this stuff and deal with it.

What helped you figure out that you're not that fucked up?

That the scene is legitimate. If you can write about it, and if you can organize it, and make sense of it, in a piece of writing, then you're obviously not crazy. Maybe I just decided, Okay, I am, so what?

You've said a few times, "I'm fucked up." What is it about yourself now that makes you feel fucked up?

Gawd, I don't know. Everything. I don't know, ya know?

I liked your Ziggy character in *Try*. He was kind of obsessed with Calhoun, but he didn't come across as wholly tortured by it; he had enough stuff going on in his life that it wasn't his first priority. I don't remember him lying around and crying horribly about it.

I think when he gets older, he'll be a mess. Actually, the guy that I kinda based it on... yeah he definitely grew up to be a big mess.

Your characters are really just great. It's great that someone's just putting it on paper. One thing that's really great about your writing is that your characters go somewhere. Calhoun actually telling Ziggy to come by.

Yeah, yeah. It's cool.

Dennis' house for Period. Photo James Levendos

I've read that you went to Amsterdam to kick a drug habit?

I went there for a number of reasons. I was doing a tremendous amount of cocaine, so there's that, but I also fell in love with somebody. My parents were giving me some money and they cut me off so I couldn't live in New York. It was those three things. And plus I wanted to write, and I wasn't writing because I was doing too much partying. It was just cocaine. It wasn't like anything really heavy.

I've lived with cocaine addicts. It sucked.

I sucked, but I never had to go into rehab or anything. I went over there and did even more of it. It didn't really work out the way I'd planned.

There was another porn script with Norman Yonemoto.

We wrote that years ago in the early 80s. He did all the early Matt Sterling films under the name Jason Sato. He's a friend of mine. He thought maybe we could get it made. William Higgins was gonna give him some money, and these different people might give him some money but they all ended up saying there was too much narrative and they didn't give us money for it. If somebody wanted to make a movie of it, fine, but I haven't even looked at it in years. I don't even know if it's any good.

Do you find now that you're able to communicate with people better? Do you feel comfortable around others?
I'm not really very comfortable around people. I think one of the definite pluses of being somebody that people know is that it gives you a kind of way to talk to people. I can just be Dennis Cooper. I think it helps me if I can just be like, oh, I'm this writer, and then I can talk to people. It makes me feel more like I don't have to hide. It's not like I'm uncomfortable with people. I'm more comfortable than I used to be. I'm a little more sociable than I used to be. I'm nicer than I used to be.

I like being nice.
Yeah. It's cool.

Do you talk to your parents now?
Um... a little, yeah.

Have they read your books?
I think my dad read a couple of them. My mom's line on it is basically, "I'll read your reviews." My siblings too are very very uncomfortable with my work and are uncomfortable with whatever. They don't like to talk about it. They don't want to hear about it. They have no interest in it whatsoever.

A book comes out and they don't even pay attention. I'll say, oh my book came out, and they go, oh really, oh, huh. They're just really uncomfortable about it. Partially because of the subject matter and partially just because, I think they all would've rather have been doing things other than what they're doing.

Did you ever feel that you wanted to be closer to them when you were younger?
No. I'm relieved that I'm not. Always was.

I think one of the trappings about coming out for so many closeted gay people is they're afraid of their parents.
I know, but it's really real. John Ashbery didn't admit he was gay until his mother died, he was in his 60s. Because he didn't want to hurt his mother. People do that.

Is Bob Mould different now about the whole experience?
I don't know. He just freaked out on me. A couple years ago he went off on me in an internet interview. I thought, gawd, he's still fucking on me about that? I admire the guy. I don't know exactly what he's up to right now with his music. Seems like he's off on some weird track. I wish he hadn't gotten so upset about it.

It was because he didn't want to come out. He was uncomfortable. He forced himself to come out. He blamed me. You know, that's fine. He's a great artist and a good guy.

He's very out now. A couple years after that he really did come out pretty much. He's pretty out now. At the time I did that that was the first time he talked about it and he really did not want to talk about it. Because we were friends, he did, but I think he wishes he hadn't done it, I think he still wishes he hadn't done it.

I didn't like 'gay' because it meant you had to like Barbra Streisand and Bette Midler and now it's twenty years later and although it's changed somewhat, it still means the same thing. It seems like it's time to move on.
I think everybody that I know who is intelligent and interesting at all feels utterly alienated from gay culture because gay culture is worse than straight culture. It's so fucking consumerist and right-wing and hedonistic and superficial and boring. That fact that gay culture has become so completely heinous on every level and embarrassing, I think it makes everybody I know feel much freer to feel like, fuck that.

LITTLE CAESAR 8

Iggy Pop by Gerard Malanga on the cover of Little Caesar 8

You know what I mean? It's gotten so bad that it's kinda nice, really.

I feel I'm meeting more people who feel more comfortable being them rather than someone who fits in a box.
I've always gravitated toward people like that. Most of my friends aren't gay. It's weird but it's always been that way. I have gay friends, of course, but really it's weird that the majority of my friends aren't gay. It's very strange. The gay people that have always been my friends have always been freaks.

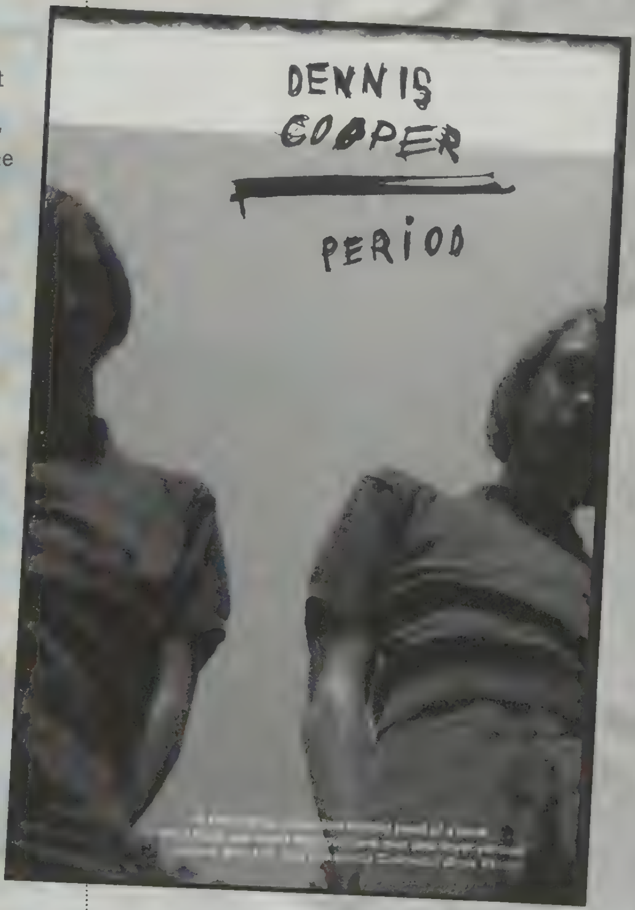
So Period really was affected fully by you learning of George's passing.
All the books are totally about what I'm going through at the time of my life that I write them. So that's what I was going through, you know? There's absolutely no similarity at all with what I ended up writing before I found out he died.

Did you ever get in touch with Kip Kinkel?
No, I never got that far. I was thinking about it and realized it would be very difficult. I wasn't sure I wanted to do that. When I saw the Frontline episode on him I thought, okay, this is everything I need to know. I thought, okay, I don't need to see any more than this. That confession told me everything I needed to know.

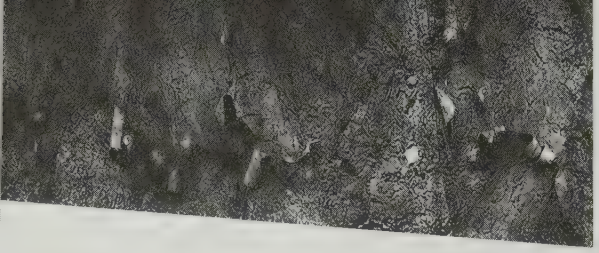
I'm sure he's a big christian and all that stuff. Those kids always have to go through all these weird transformations when they're in jail. I don't really think there would be that much to say to him. I'm sure he feels really bad about it.

If anything's going to change, it's going to take adults stopping staying closed up in themselves. Just sitting and listening. A lot of kids just don't think there is anybody. A lot of kids seem really screwy and weird on the outside but for a lot of kids that's all they know about how to communicate.
There's just a pervasive and complete disrespect for teenagers in America. Absolutely across the board. Teenagers are either supposed to give you a hard-on or they're supposed to make you think and feel about your own past. There's absolutely no respect for teenagers in American culture. It's one of the reasons I've written these books.

I think it's shocking. It shocked me when I was as a teenager. One of the reasons I write about teenagers is because I was appalled when I was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen that no one would be taking me seriously. Now I'm an adult and it still appalls me.



Cover of Period, featuring George Miles.



ANDRE LASSEN

ANDRE DOESN'T TRAVEL MUCH

and I've never been to Amsterdam so we have yet to meet, though we had a nice phone conversation for a now-defunct art magazine that just had to be included here. H. R. Giger's agent Leslie Barany introduced me to Andre's work and I was stunned by his wonderful thrones, detailed skeletal cutlery, and fantastically large pieces of almost-living functional art. Richard Stanley is also a fan and pulled out a nice book of Andre's creations, Gothic, when I visited him in London.

We have lovely skulls, helmeted sculptures, and a fantastic bar to sink your eyes into. The dark and fantastic world of Andre Lassen awaits...

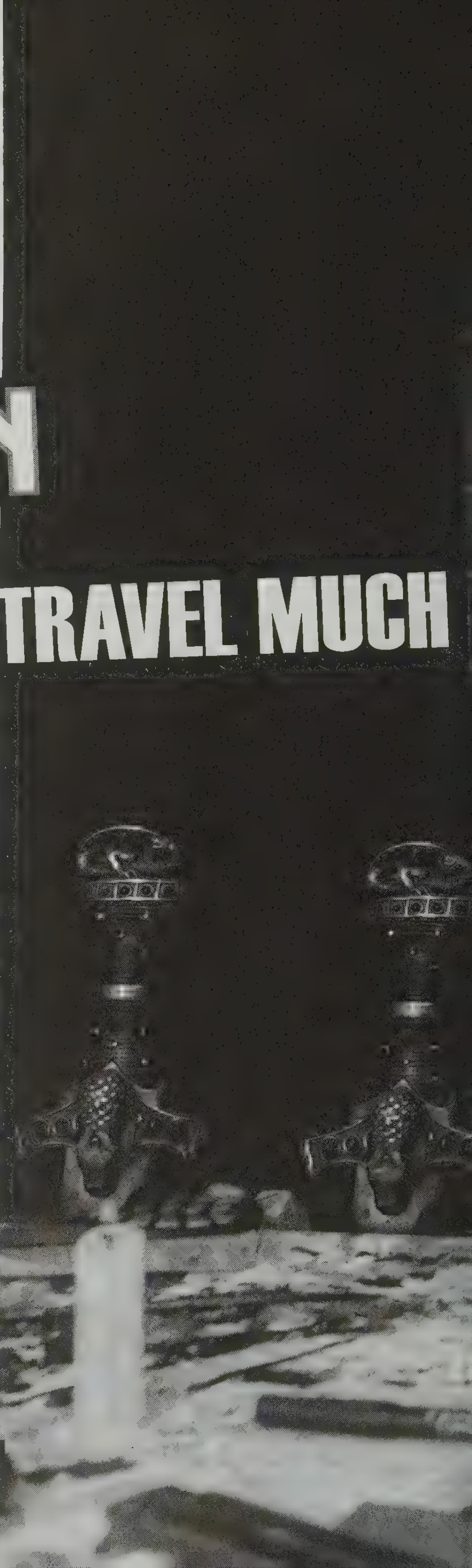
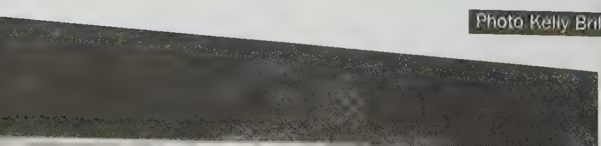


Photo Kelly Brill.



"He's still in jail, for the rest of his life."

SHADE RUPE: You live in Holland?
ANDRE LASSEN: Yes. I was born in Amsterdam.

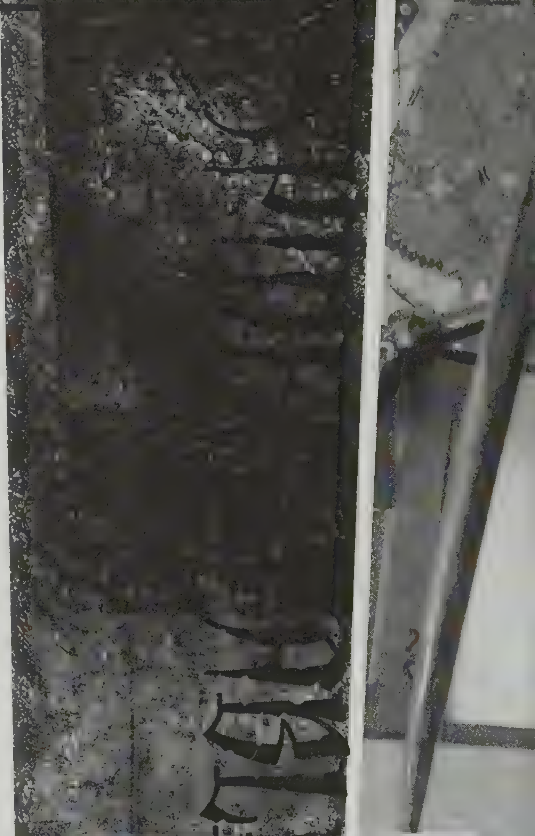
Did you see a lot of incredible things growing up?
Oh, yes. I've seen it all.

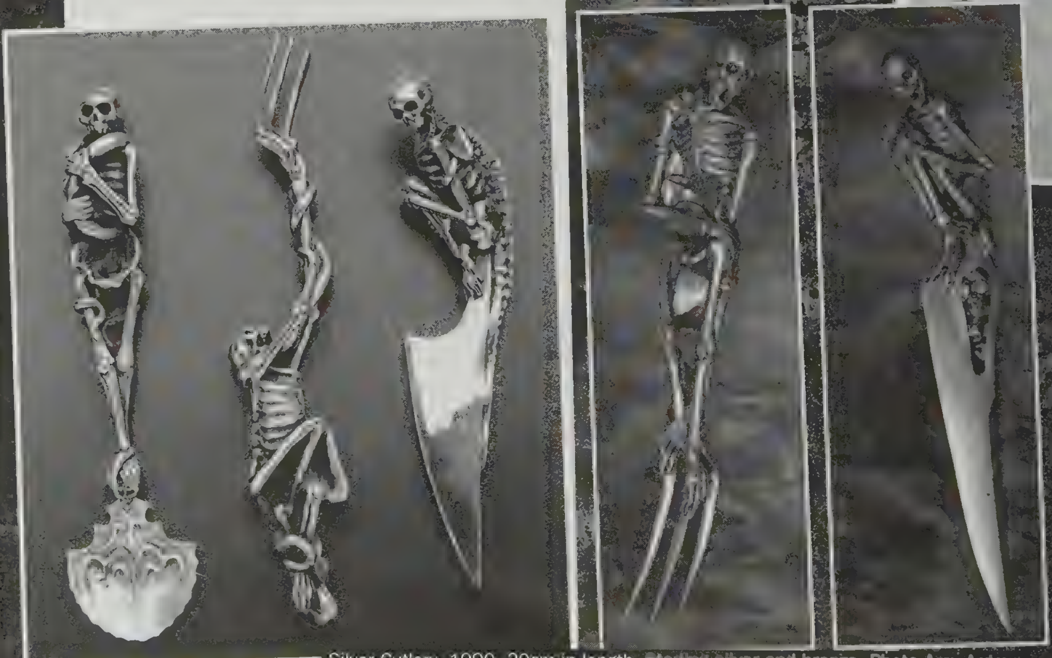
How far were you from the red light district?
About four, five kilometers.

Was there anything you saw then that later contributed to your art?
Well, of course, youth always helps to create something. Any impression you get.

What mediums do you like to work in?
I like to work in everything, except stone, because stone takes too long.

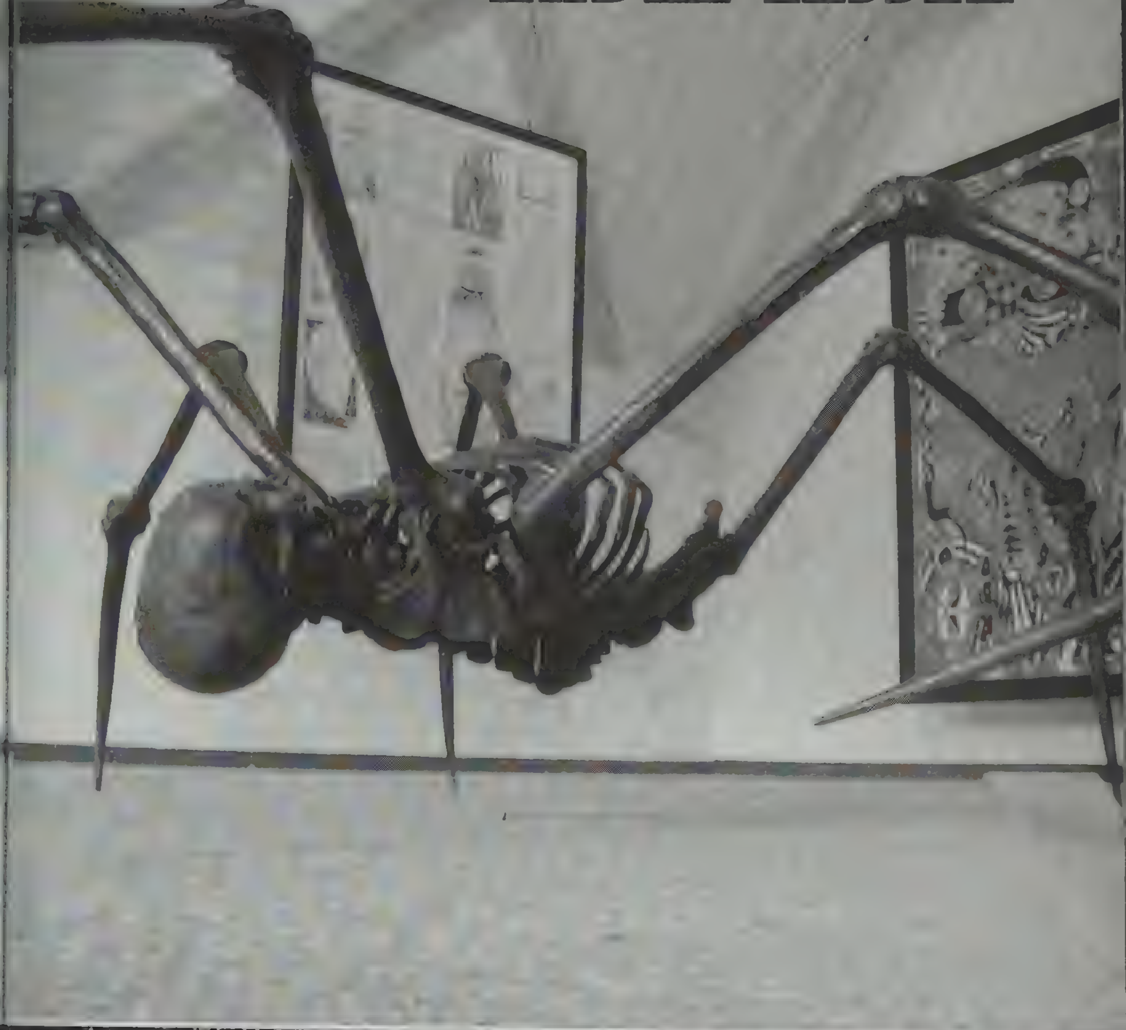
When did you begin creating swords?
I was maybe ten, eleven-years-old. My uncle was a blacksmith in the south of Denmark. Viking country. We went there on vacation, something in Easter or early spring. I spent every day behind the fire and the anvil. I looked like a monster for two weeks. I was making swords. Little swords, of course. Little things. Little working guillotines.



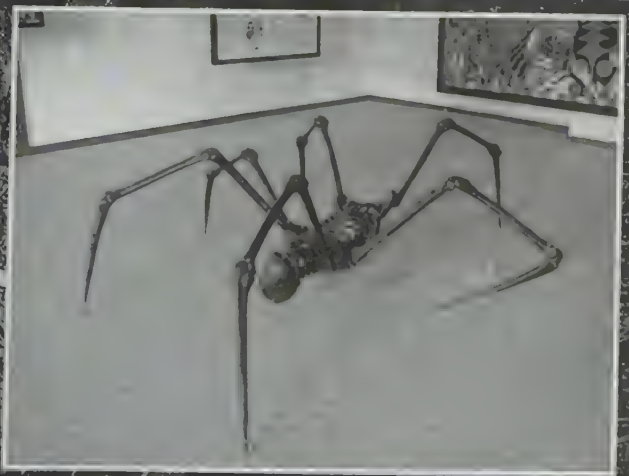


Silver Cutlery, 1990. 20cm in length. Sterling silver and bronze. Photo Amy Ardrey.

ANDRE LASSEN



Above and right: Spider Table, 1989. Cast bronze, 152x91x61cm. Collection H.R. Giger. Gruyeres, Switzerland. Photo Chris Conte.

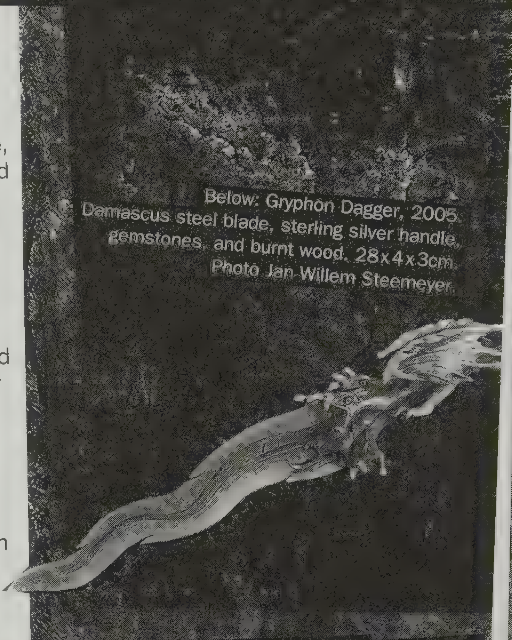


For years and years we didn't go there, and then he died. So only one vacation experience, but it never left my mind. It always was there. And several years ago I had the possibility to build a fire somewhere, and I already had an anvil, and then I started to make blades.

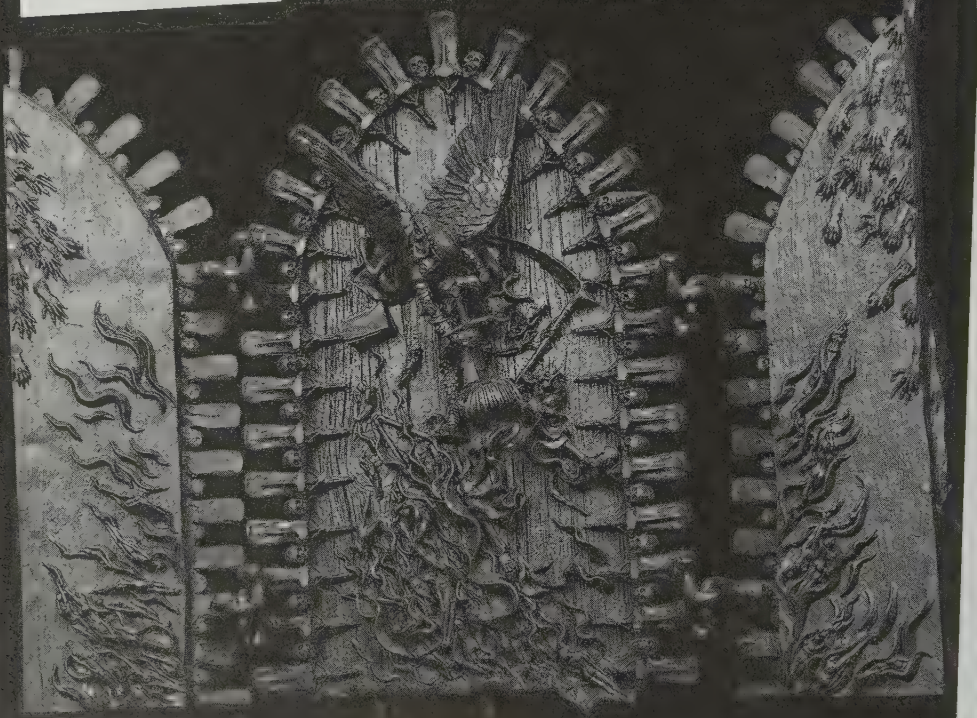
A lot of your work seems alive. The Spider Table, the way you've posed it, it looks like it could be moving. Like you just caught a moment in its life.

The Spider Table, is from a dream that I had as a kid, maybe nine years old. I remember we were in school, in the late 50s, and the Russians invaded Hungary. I had a dream about this upside-down spider. It walked through the streets upside down, with his face up. It was a thing I had in my mind. Maybe it was the tanks that were parked on the street corners. It was a fearsome time.

Below: Gryphon Dagger, 2005.
Damascus steel blade, sterling silver handle, gemstones, and burnt wood. 28x4x3cm.
Photo Jan Willem Steemeyer.



Triptych of Immortality, 2003. Bronze. Photo Jan Willem Steemeyer.



Next page: The Gate, 1994. Bronze, 2.4mx2mx22cm relief.
Depicts the mythical realm of Camelot. King Arthur with the Holy Grail,
Lancelot with the crystal of Merlin, and the Virgin of the Lake with Excalibur. Photo Atelier Lassen.

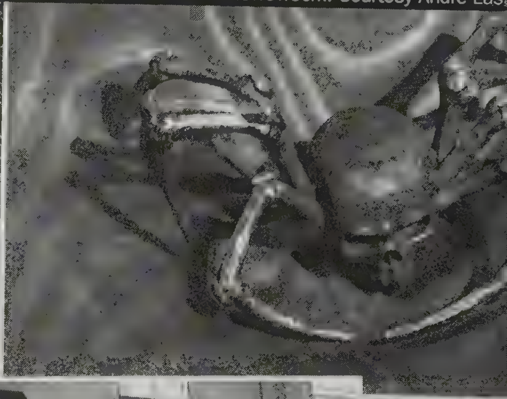
Was this an actual dream?
Yeah, this was a dream. This was a nightmare. This was a nightmare.

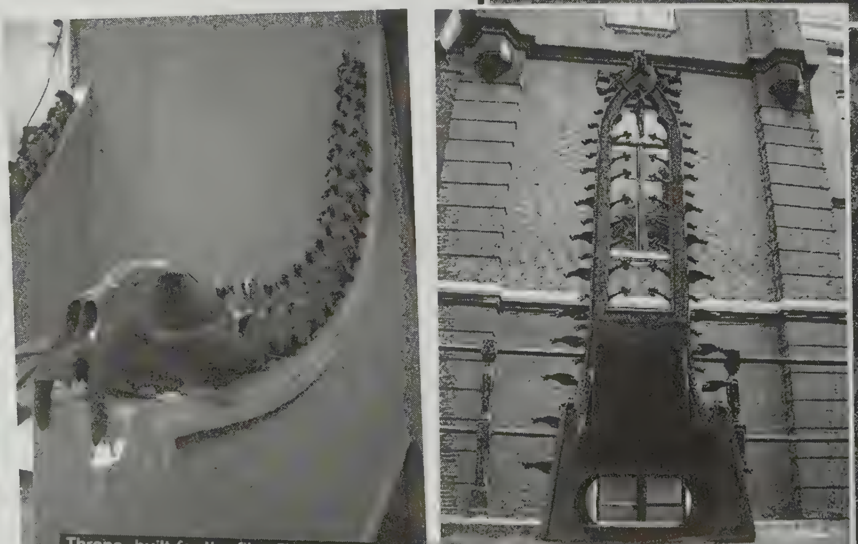
I love your furniture.
Yes, I did the cabinet which is on my website. I did the vampire throne, with the bats. And I just did a new throne, built up out of skeletons. The back is built up with skeletons and horns that go very high. And above your head there is this huge king with a large skull. He's laughing and in his two hands, near your ears, he is holding two huge knives. It's like a throne for a cannibal or something. Terrible.

You've also created a full working bar.
Yes. That was my first experience with wood carvers in Indonesia. I chose Indonesia because there are terrific workers there. Very good professional carvers. And if you bring a model there, not sketches, but a model, they can do the full size for you.

How were you financing all these bigger pieces of art?
To tell you the truth, I don't know. It is a miracle to me how I do this, through all these years. I think it is an enormous will of creating, but also I can do nothing else but this.

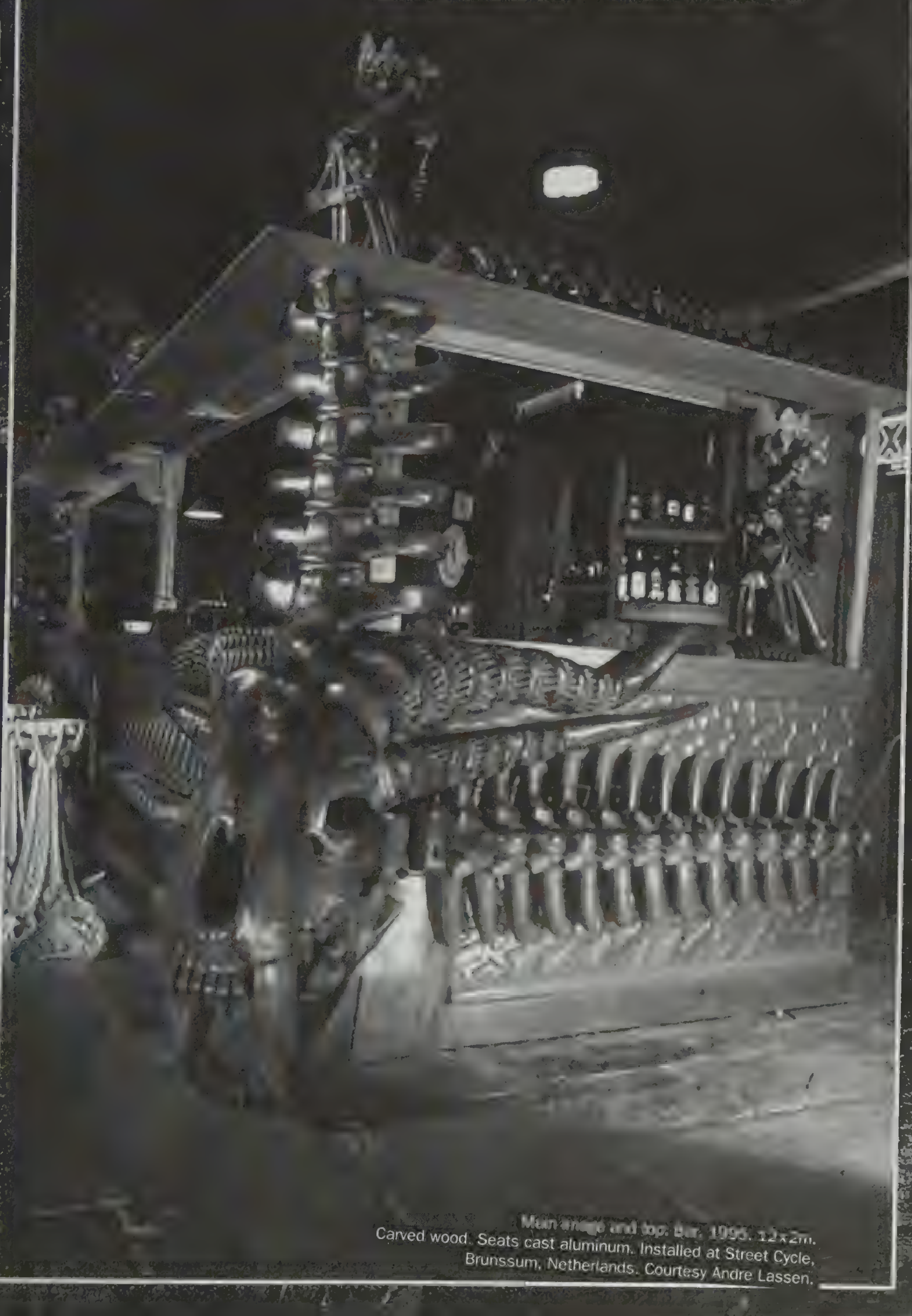
Spider Skull, 2003. Bronze. 10x5x5cm. Courtesy Andre Lass





Throne, built for the film *Floris*, 2004. Wood, resin, fabric. 300x60x60cm. Photo Andre Lassen

ANDRE LASSEN



Main image and top: Bar, 1995. 12x2m.
Carved wood. Seats cast aluminum. Installed at Street Cycle,
Brunssum, Netherlands. Courtesy Andre Lassen.

When did you decide that being an artist was what you would do with your life?
I never decided that. You are born with that. You never decide. The people who decide they're going to be artists are always fake. When you are an artist, however it is, it can be beautiful and it can be shit. It is usually shit, but you are born with it. You cannot do anything else.

Was The Gate also done in Indonesia?
No, that is a model I made myself. Someone came in the shop and bought three sculptures. Quite expensive. Quite a bit of money. A couple of weeks later, he came back: "Can you make something for me? I have an office, and I would like something for the reception area. Something for the wall. Can you design something for me?"

So I designed this gate on paper. The gate of the castle of King Arthur. I showed him the drawings, and he liked it. Two-meters-forty by two meters. That's half a year's work. So he paid me some money: he knew it was not going to be cheap.

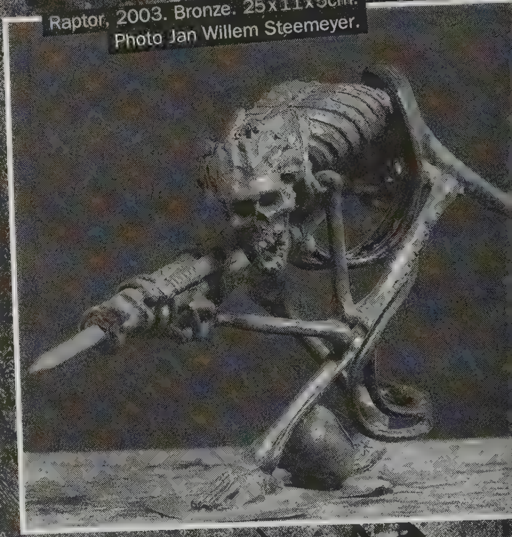
Halfway through the job the guy didn't turn up anymore. And I kept phoning, and then the phone was not working. Nothing. A few days later, police stepped into my workplace, and they said: "Do you know Mr. So-and-so?" "Yeah, I know him. I'm working now on his gate." "Uh-huh. Well, he's been arrested." He was a very, very heavy criminal. Very sick, also.

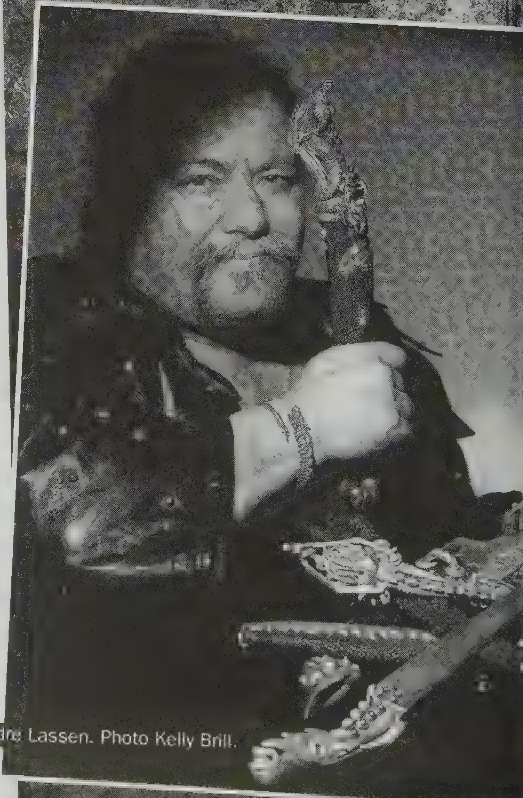
You didn't deliver the finished piece to him, did you?
No, of course not. He's still in jail, for the rest of his life.

But this case... if you take the case of Silence of the Lambs. This was something similar. Very sick. I mean, really very sick.

The story about The Gate is complicated, very heavy. When the police stepped into my shop, they told me everything. Well, not everything, because I asked them: "Please, do me one favor and don't tell me anything else, because I know enough now." It took me at least a half year to resolve that for myself, you know?

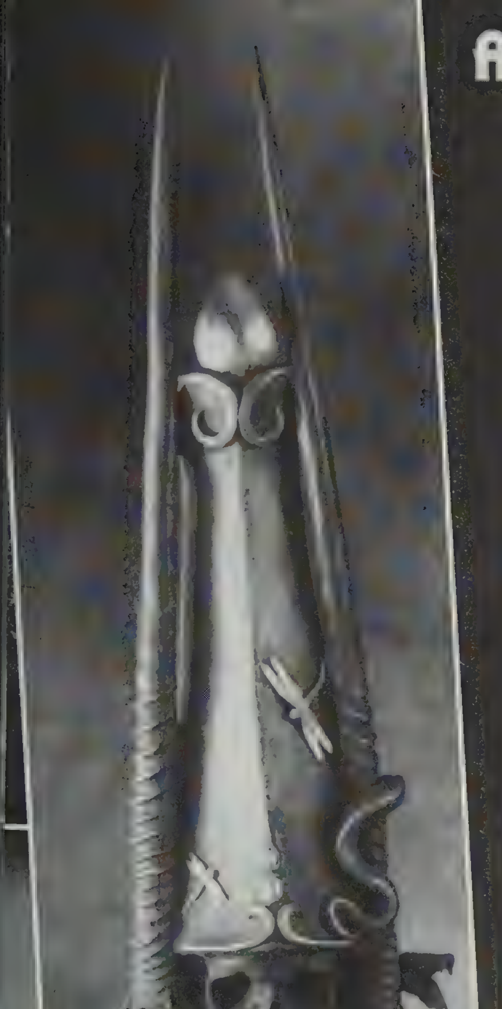
Raptor, 2003. Bronze. 25 x 11 x 5cm.
Photo Jan Willem Steemeyer.



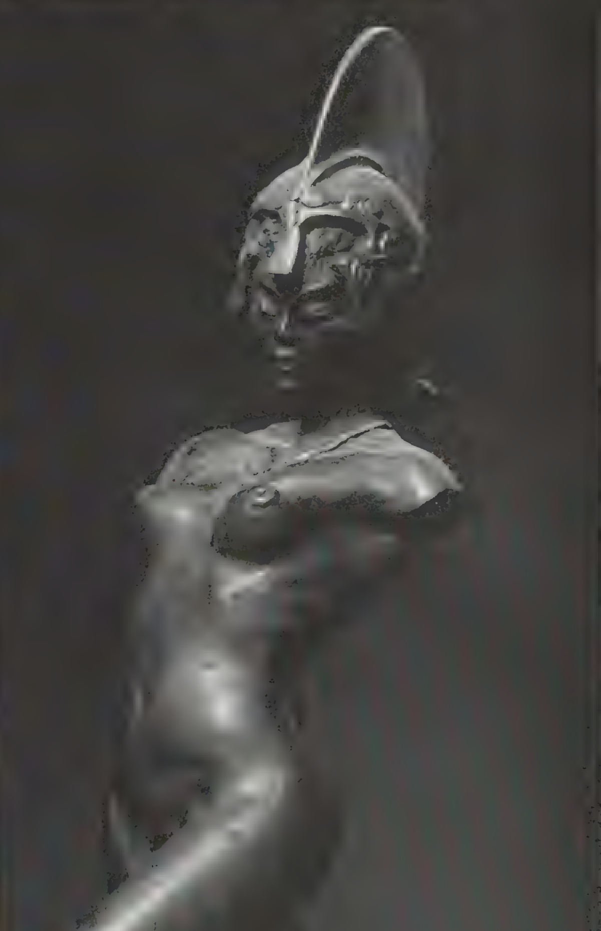


André Lassen. Photo Kelly Brill.

ANDRE LASSEN



Medusa, 1999. Bronze, silver, gold.
110x25x30cm. Photo Wim de Graaf.



Trojan Heroine, 1999.
Bronze. 30x10x10cm. Photo Jan Willem. Steemeyer.

TURA SATANA

Long an object of absolute worship, Tura Satana is the archetypal poster lady for Amazonian women. Strong and in charge, Tura continues to provoke and inspire, both through her website and her immortal performance as Varla in Russ Meyer's eternal classic *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* I was graced with over two hours of the woman's time.

SHADE RUPE: What was your birth name?
TURA SATANA: Tura Yamaguchi. My father was Japanese and Filipino. His name was Juntaro. My mother was Cheyenne Indian and Scotch-Irish.

Where does the name Tura come from?
Tura is derived from both cultures. In Japanese it means 'tiger', in Cheyenne it means 'white flower'.

Where were you born?
Hokkaido, Japan, but we came over here just before the war. My father knew that the war was coming, so he had documents made

A long-limbed buxom dancing doll, Tura Satana was born Tura Yamaguchi. Her father was Japanese and Filipino. His name was Juntaro. Her mother was Cheyenne Indian and Scots-Irish.

Her fans keep coming back for more!

that showed that I was born in Chicago. This was right before Pearl Harbor.

What work did your parents do when they moved to the U.S.?
My father came here to the States and became an actor in silent films in Hollywood. He met my mother while she was a circus performer in California. She was a contortionist and acrobat. She started out in Chicago, and was born in St. Louis.

They met in California. And when they married, my father owned the property that is now Long Beach Airport.

Were you the firstborn?
No, my brother was born first.

And you have two sisters?
I had three sisters, but one passed away in 62.

Did any of your siblings enter the creative arts at all?
Yeah, my younger sister Ampar, and Pamela, were both burlesque dancers. My sister Kim worked on a movie called The Human Duplicators. She played the Oriental doctor.

You were born in 35?
No, 38. People think that because when I first started dancing I had to be older than I was. I got an ID that said that I was born in 35; it was actually my brother's ID. I just used his date of birth so that I would be older than I really was. I used the year that he was born and I had his baptismal record, but with my name on it, so I was able to get a fake ID that way.

Did it have a picture on it?
No, no picture. That I was the only way I was able to get the phony ID. I could use his baptismal records because we got baptized at the same time in the interment camp. It is the only reason I was able to get away with it, because my brother, my father, and I were all put in the internment camps.

That happened right after Pearl Harbor?
Yeah.

Do you remember what city you were living in until that time?
Long Beach. My father had a farm, an orchard. And they took that over.

So he had already stopped acting in the silent films, or was he still acting at that time?
He had stopped. He stopped in 36, I think, or 37.

So you were only three years old when your family was moved to Manzanar?
Right. But they didn't put my mother in there. My mother was full-blooded American. They wouldn't let her come into the camp, because she was an American citizen. She was also a Native American. She could go to a reservation nearby, but she was not allowed in the camp.

Was there any sort of a mail service? Could you stay in touch with your mother at all?
No, she would come and visit every so often. She'd come to the fence, and that was about it. That was just in case she tried pass messages, you know?

So you were there with your three sisters and your brother and your father?
No. I was there with my brother, my father and myself. My sister—the one that passed away—she was with my mom. My mom was pregnant with her at the time, and she had the baby while we were in the camp.

So they wouldn't allow babies into the camp. So if a Japanese couple had a baby, where would the baby go?
If the Japanese couple had a baby, then they would let the baby stay with the family. But since they did not let my mother in, they couldn't take the baby away from her. The baby was too young. She couldn't say anything, so she wasn't talking. She was no threat to them.

What kind of a home did they have for you? What kind of a lodging were you in?
At first it was a Quonset hut. It was about five or six families per hut. We all slept on cots.

Was there any sort of medical attention that was available?
Yes, we had our own Japanese nurses and doctors who were also interned.

Were there enough supplies?

Tura in *Cabaret* magazine, January 1957.

They brought in supplies, until we could grow our own. And then we had to grow our own food.

And was this solely run by Japanese people or were there American soldiers overseeing things?
There were American soldiers overseeing everything.

I've seen these little huts that really resemble the watchtowers that the Nazis had. And I've seen a couple that look like they were at Manzanar. They were shorter. They were on the ground rather than elevated.
They did have the taller ones at each corner of the camp.

And they had armed guards, then?
Yes. And dogs.

Was there any other kind of abuse from the American soldiers there?
No. Basically you just had to stay away from the fences. Otherwise you'd get in trouble.

What happened to your family's land?
It got confiscated. They paid my dad ten cents on the dollar for it.

That's quite a bargain.
Oh, yes. He also got taxed for it.

So no one had money inside the camp?
No. There was no need for money, because the government supplied everything, except once we started growing our own vegetables, and stuff like that, they didn't supply that anymore.

I know that fish tends to be a large part of the Japanese diet. Was that made available at all?
Very little. And the rice they had to ship in, because the land around Lone Pine is not very conducive to rice paddies.

Did they have any activities for children? Was there any sort of a playground or anything for kids to do?
Not at the time when I was there. You could make paper dolls. If you got a good piece of wood, your father could carve it out or what have you.

They provided clothing also?
The dresses we wore in Manzanar were made out of rice sacks and potato sacks. They had flowery patterns to the material, but were very scratchy. Also very uncomfortable for underwear, but had to be worn.

Were you aware that this was an unusual way to live?
I was aware that I didn't have my mother anymore. She was not there until after we got out of the camps. Once they relocated us to Chicago in 1943, we were fine.

That was before the war ended. Did you ever hear why they decided to close the camp that early?
They didn't close it. They just were getting a little too full, so they started relocating the Japanese families away from the coasts. So we were relocated to Chicago, Ohio, the Midwest.

Did they offer your family any sort of money to begin a new life in Chicago?
No. They offered my dad a job. He got a job on the railroad, and worked on the railroad.

Was there a Japanese community in Chicago?

No, they didn't put us together. We were the only Japanese family within twenty miles of us. It wasn't fun, let me tell you. I used to have to fight my way to and from school all the time.

As a six-year-old.
Uh huh.

Were you able to make friends with anyone in your school?

Not until I was there for about two years. And then my friends would be the ones that were rejects from everybody else.

What part of Chicago were you in?
The West Side of Chicago. We were put into the very nasty area of Chicago. We were put in what they call a housing project. The Jane Addams Housing Project, I remember that.

Mostly it was Italians, Germans, Jews, I guess. Mexicans. Not very many Mexicans. And the blacks were across 12th Street, Roosevelt Road. And that was basically the neighborhood. Greeks also.

I know that you had a really horrible event happen when you were ten years old. Were you coming home from school at that time?

Actually, I was about nine-and-a-half. I was coming home from the bakery. My mother had sent me to the bakery, because she had a sweet tooth.

This was about five o'clock in the afternoon. I got grabbed by five guys off of the street. Right in public. They called me over and asked me a question, and, idiot that I was, I tried to answer it for them. The next thing I knew I was in the car. They drove me quite a way from the bakery and my home. They drove me to an alleyway and raped me there. They left me there in the alley.

Tura and pals in Ted V. Mikels' *The Doll Squad*.

Did they have any idea of your age?

It wasn't important. But at nine-and-a-half I had a 36B bust, so they thought I was older.

How did you get home from that?

I crawled about two miles.

And no one stopped to help?

No.

Did you see people while you were crawling?

Yeah. I was also bleeding.

Were you taken to a hospital then?

Yeah, because when I got home my father was talking to the police, because he was looking for me. The cops were the first ones to see me crawling up the sidewalk.

Were any of those men ever captured?

They were all caught. One of the cops was a cousin or an uncle to one of the boys.

Did they receive any sort of punishment?

No. The oldest one, who was twenty-one at the time, his dad paid $1,000 to the judge. They got off, and I was sent to reform school because I 'tempted' those boys.

Right. When did you begin your training in the martial arts?

I had started it already when I was about seven years old, with my dad. Unfortunately, I was still a lightweight then.

I wouldn't expect too many nine-and-a-half-year-olds to be able to fend off five teenagers.

I think the youngest one was eighteen. And they were all pretty big guys.

How long did you spend there?

The first time I went there—I went there several times, you know—I was there for about six months. I spent most of it in solitary confinement. No windows, a door, and a floor. No bed. You slept on the floor.

And why did they do that?
Because when I first got there, there was a girl who was considered the big cheese. And I wasn't going to be anybody's bitch.

That's pretty young, to go from a little girl missing her mother in an internment camp to being in a reform school.
It's almost like the same thing.

When did you realize that no one else was going to be the big cheese?
I realized that she wasn't going to make me her broad when I literally mopped up the floor with her. I think she was fourteen or fifteen years old.

Some kids grow up and they think, "I'm a nerd," and some kids think, "I'm a loser. When did you realize, "I'm going to win"?
Going to school. I got to the point where I was just so disgusted with having to fight my way to and from school. There were six of these black girls who used to always pick on me when I was going home. And the leader of the black girls was a girl by the name of Jeanette Johnson.

I decided if I was going to beat anybody up, I had to beat her up, because otherwise these girls were going to keep on at me. Since she was the ringleader, I proceeded to just chop the shit out of her. And when her friends jumped in, I chopped the shit out of them.

Did they stop teasing you at that point?
Yeah, after that, eventually. But that was after I came back from reform school, and that's why I went back to reform school.

My high school days were very short, and very numbered. When I got to high school, McKinley High School, the whole senior class of girls tried to do away with me because their senior boyfriends were trying to get me to go out with them.

I was a freshman. I had only been in school for three months, and I wound up getting into so many fights there that they finally put me into what they call reform school high school. I was sent to Montefiori High School for the bad girls.

Were you able to get any sort of education when you're trying to survive all the time?
It's a little hard, isn't it? No, but I really loved school. I loved learning. I still do. As much as I can, about different things. My father taught us to appreciate learning, because without learning, you don't have anything. There's nothing there for you. If you don't try to learn, and learn something new every day, you're lost.

I try to learn something new every day. I usually manufacture or do something where I learn something new, something different. If it's just going on the Internet and looking through something there, I do it that way.

You had reached puberty earlier than age thirteen.
Oh, yeah. I reached puberty at nine.

You definitely had quite an adult education, because at thirteen your parents had an arranged marriage set up for you.
Right. That's where I got the last name Satana, from my first husband. He was Japanese and Italian. I was betrothed to him from the time I was born. At the time we got married he was seventeen. He was stationed in Boca Chica Naval Base in Florida.

At thirteen I was ready to leave Chicago anyway, due to the fact that I was sick and tired of fighting going to and from school and everything else. And especially after I was raped, I was always treated like garbage at school.

God forbid that any woman should ever be labeled like that. That they're trash because of the fact that they got raped. Something like that is very wrong. Everybody treats you like you have the plague.

The only teacher I ever had that was fairly nice to us, because she knew that my brother and I both wanted to learn, and all of us kids really wanted to learn, was Mrs. McMahon. She would take the time to help us. If I didn't understand something, she would try and explain it to me. She knew we wanted to learn.

Did you and your first husband have any love for each other?
No.

The SWEETEST KITTENS Have The SHARPEST CLAWS!
Faster, PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!

Women at that time definitely stayed at home, did the dishes, did the clothes. Was that the role that was assigned to you?
That's what was expected of me. I tried that for about nine months, and then I said, "No, I'm sorry. This isn't working out. You and I are friends, but..." Sexually we were fine. But as far as us getting along, his personality was totally different than mine. I liked to learn things. He wanted to be dormant. It was not conducive to me being there, because I felt like I was stagnating.

And he said, "Well, in Florida, the only way you can get a divorce is to commit adultery." And I say, "Fine, then I'll commit adultery." So that's exactly what we did. We made arrangements to have one of his friends say that I committed adultery with him.

How did your parents feel about this?
My father already knew I was very unhappy about the whole thing. So my father said, "Well, you tried."

Did any of your husband's friends on the base find it odd that you were a thirteen-year-old married woman?
Yes. But most of his friends never realized that I was that young.

Because you were so developed?
Uh-huh.

And smart.

Well, yeah. I was smarter than him, I tell you.

Were you able to relate to teenagers your own age?
No. They were concerned with the latest styles. I was concerned about making a living or trying to better myself, which was not conducive to their way of thinking.

After I came back, I did start a girl gang. But the girl gang was basically to make sure that nobody else in that neighborhood ever got raped again.

How did you meet these girls?
They were friends. I had a newspaper route when I was a kid, and I used to deliver newspapers to their houses. And some of the girls were in reform school with me and stuff like that. We eventually formed a gang and we patrolled the neighborhood, and anybody who tried to hurt young kids or other females usually wound up in the hospital.

What nationalities were some of these girls in your gang?
One girl was Polish. One girl was Jewish and Italian. And one girl was Italian. And another one was Irish. And one girl was Mexican.

They called us the Angels. The neighborhood called us that. Because we helped several young ladies.

Did you identify yourselves as a gang with your clothing?
We wore leather jackets. We all had basically the same leather jackets. And our hair was always in ponytails.

How old were you then?
About fourteen. That's when I was having so many problems with my probation officer. Because when I'd come back to Chicago, even though I'd been married, she said, "Well, you're not married anymore, so you're my property." And I said, "Oh no I'm not!"

When she started hassling me, my father took me and said that I would stay with some family friend of his in L.A. The only problem was his family friend decided that he would rather go to bed with me than be an uncle. He was in his late thirties, early forties.

Eventually I got out on my own. I just walked away. I took my clothes, walked away, found a job, and then found a place to stay.

When did you start dancing?
I started dancing when I was about thirteen. As a burlesque dancer at fifteen. At thirteen I was doing acrobatic dancing and Spanish dancing in a club. When I moved to California, when I left the uncle's house, I got a job as a cigarette girl at the Moulin Rouge on Hollywood Boulevard.

And you had your lovely fake ID.
Yes. I was able to get the job there because at that time you could be eighteen years old and work in a club like that. But I was working as a cigarette girl, so I wasn't even serving booze.

I worked there for about four months, and then a guy by the name of Turk Prujan came in. He asked me if I would come to work for him. He was moving the Trocadero nightclub from Malibu to Sunset Boulevard. I said, "Okay, sure. I'll work over there."

A couple of times some acts didn't show up or didn't come in or were late, so he would always be pulling his hair out to find out how to fill in the time. And I said, "Well, I can sing for you, or I can dance for you. Which do you want?"

Did you learn any of this from your parents, the singing and dancing?
Oh, yes. My mother was a contortionist, and she was very good. She used to do a lot of impressionistic dancing with the hula, and Spanish dancing. She also did some Filipino dancing; she did all kinds. So I learned a lot of that from her.

When I went to school, whenever we had an assembly or anything like that, I was the one who the principal called up to sing, because I was the school soloist. And nine times out of ten, whenever we had choirs, I was also the soloist in front of the choir. The voice was there. I had four-and-a-half octaves. The teachers were fairly nice to me. The only one that was really an asshole was Mr. Clark.

What made him an asshole?
Mr. Clark always tried to corner me in the cloakroom.

Japanese chirashi for *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*

His hands were always all over my chest.

You definitely had a reason to learn how to kick some ass, huh?
Uh-huh.

How often were you dancing at the club?
I danced whenever anybody didn't show up. That was sometimes once a night, sometimes for a week. I started out singing, and Turk said even though my voice was beautiful, he preferred the dancing. He told me he didn't know of anybody who moved to music the way I did. They could play anything and I could dance to it.

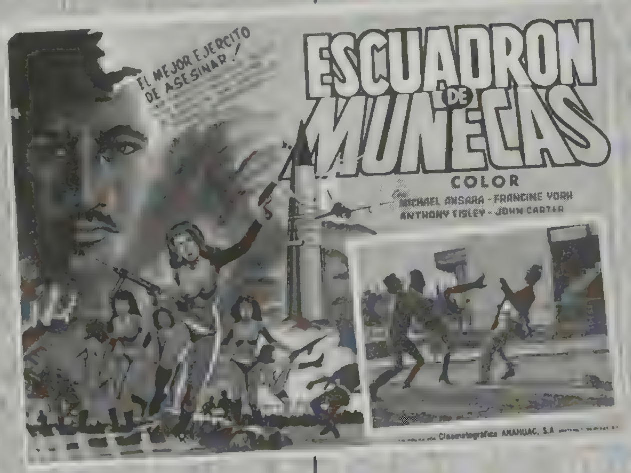
Were they providing your costumes at that time?
No, at the time I just used what was there. Sometimes I'd do a lot of acrobatics in the routine. Sometimes I didn't. Sometimes I'd just do hula dancing, but not quite.

When you were dancing at the Trocadero, were people trying to get all over you there?
Turk would watch out for me, and he'd make everybody back off. He'd tell me, "If you want to go out with him, it's okay." And I'd say, "That's fine. I don't have time for this." I was busy trying to make a living.

Was this a burlesque-type act at that time?
No, it was legitimate. Strictly legitimate. I didn't take any clothes off. At the time, I was trying to make money any way I could, so I was also doing photography modeling. That's when I met Harold Lloyd.

He just looked up a model index and saw your photograph and called you?
Yeah. He was the only one I ever posed in the nude for.

Who was he taking pictures for?
Himself.


EL MEJOR EJERCITO DE ASESINAR!
ESCUADRON DE MUÑECAS
COLOR
Con MICHAEL ANSARA - FRANCINE YORK
ANTHONY EISLEY - JOHN CARTER

What sort of relationship did you have?
We had a very nice relationship. His camera loved me, and he was very, very sweet. He never made a pass at me or anything like that. He just kept telling me, "You have such a beautiful face." It was kind of embarrassing sometimes, but he said, "You know, my camera just loves you."

I didn't know who he was at the time. All I knew was that his name was Harold. It wasn't until after I had been posing for him for about three months that I finally

learned he was Harold Lloyd, the silent screen actor.

And Harold never knew how old you were?
No.

Did you ever get to see any of the photographs that he took?
Yes, he showed me several and there was one that he took that I wish I had now. He had me next to a fountain waterfall in his backyard, and it was absolutely stunning. He shot it in black and white and in color.

Did he have a Hollywood star-type home?
All I knew was that he was well-to-do, because of the property. And then he'd also take me out to Malibu, because he had a house there too. We'd shoot scenes on the beach and stuff like that.

I don't know what happened to the pictures, and sadly, I wound up getting makeup poisoning. I should have sued Max Factor. My face broke out in a rash, apparently because of something they used in it. A really bad rash—so bad I couldn't continue with the full modeling.

They were almost like sores, where they would run and bleed. And they would itch. God, did they itch! It was ridiculous. Anyway, I had to use something called potassium permanganate. And it made my skin purple.

Too bad Star Trek wasn't going on then. You would have done very well on that show.
Yeah. Missed out on that one.

I told Harold, "I'm going to have to go home, because this is not helping." I spent all my money on doctors trying to get rid of this rash, so he gave me some money to go back to Chicago. And then I went to work at the Brass Rail as a dancer. And then from there I went to Calumet City, Illinois.

Why did you go to Calumet City?
Because at the time Ms. Williams, my probation officer, found out I was working at the Brass Rail, so I had to leave town. I went to Calumet City; I knew she wouldn't go there, because she wouldn't take her life in her hands that way.

I was dancing as a legitimate dancer there for like $75 a week. There was an act that came in called Galatea, The Statue That Came To Life. The owner came to me and said, "This act is missing a girl." The girl never bothered to show up for the act. So he asked me if I would do it. And I said, "Well, what does it consist

The Doll Squad: Tura and the gals out boating in a promotional photo, and [previous page] Mexican lobby card.

of?" And he said, "You have to take your clothes off." And I said, "Not at these prices." So he gave me a $50 raise. I was making $125 a week there.

In 53, 54, it was good money. So I became Galatea, The Statue That Came To Life. I was in a case, and it was a scene that was done with mirrors. You would see the statue there, and then slowly it would fade out and I would be there in the case. The case would open and I would step out wearing a Grecian tunic with a gold belt and a clasp on the shoulder.

What kind of music was playing with the Galatea statue?
They used Midnight In Moscow and some other music. I still have the music somewhere. After a while the audiences kept clamoring for me to do more, so I finally told the owner that I wanted to make more money. He said, "No, you can't make any more money." So I said, "Well, then, I quit. I'm going to go across the street."

Across the street was another club and I went to work over there. It was called The Rendezvous. There was a guy by the name of Tiger DuPre who had a girlfriend, a wife, and two kids. His girlfriend was pregnant, by the way. And he asked me if I would join his entourage. Me and my brother, because my brother was with me.

He was with me because he had just gotten out of jail. He had been pardoned for supposedly being in a robbery. They eventually found out he wasn't. It was a bunch of his friends who were on heroin that committed the robbery; one of his 'friends' eventually confessed it.

He did two-and-a-half years in a state penitentiary before he got pardoned. He was seventeen years old when he went in there. There's some horror stories that nobody wants to know about. He told me stories about some of the things that happened to him when he first got there that would curl your hair.

Where else did you perform from there?
Then from there we went to New Orleans.

Did you have an act? You weren't Galatea anymore.
I wasn't Galatea anymore. I was just a dancer.

But were you getting other outfits at that time?
Yes, I got a couple of them made in Calumet City. And then when I went to New Orleans I got more made, because the ones that I wore in Calumet City were basically Spanish dancer-type things, with ruffles and lace. I wanted something that was more svelte, that was more form fitting.

There was a guy in New Orleans by the name of Dale Robertson who was a female impersonator, who also made costumes for the girls. He worked on costumes for me. We created some pretty nice costumes.

Did you have to fend people off then, or was it a pretty casual existence as far as creepy people?
No, the creepy people stayed away from me because I did have another tough friend in New Orleans. There was a gal by the name of Kitty Jones. She was a street tough. She was one of the strippers along the street who was supposed to be the big cheese. Not the big star, but she was supposedly the big cheese as far as being dominant. And down the street was Lili St. Cyr.

There was some lady. She was one of the really nice ladies in the business. I became friends with her when I started working for Harold Minsky, who was married to Lili's sister. Harold used to have me come and work in his theaters all the time. Lili would come backstage and tell me how much she enjoyed my routine, and I would tell her how much I enjoyed watching her.

How long did you spend in New Orleans?
I was in New Orleans about a year and nine months. It was okay. Eventually I moved out of there, because Tiger had us living in trailers. He had his wife in one trailer, me in another trailer, and his pregnant girlfriend in some apartment there somewhere. I said, "This isn't working out for me." Tiger stayed there with his wife and his girlfriend, and I guess he got another girlfriend. I just told him, "I'm sorry, I'm leaving." My agent, Mike Riaff, came

down to New Orleans and he told me that if I want to make any more money, I need to start traveling around. So I went to St. Louis.

I was doing acrobatics and stuff like that on the stages there, and I was doing a helluva lot more work than all the rest of the girls were doing. And he thought that I had the potential to become a star.

Was that pretty normal in burlesque, to have an agent?
Back then it was pretty normal to have an agent. Mike was strictly legit, and he and his family, his wife Norma and his son, became like a second family for me. He looked out for me, he tried to make sure that people didn't hassle me and didn't bother me, even though I traveled by myself.

Plus I had several guys who were coming after me that wanted to become, like suitcase pimps. That's what I call them, anyway.

What's a suitcase pimp?
A suitcase pimp is what the girls used to classify a guy who lived off a dancer and didn't do anything except spend her money and beat her up on occasions.

VOLUPTUOUS BEAUTY PONDERS MEANS TO OBTAIN CONTROL OF "ASTRO ZOMBIES"

Tura Satanna languidly scans newspaper for latest murderous exploits of "The Astro Zombies," horror science-fiction film coming to the .... theatre.

Did you have a name for yourself when you were in New Orleans?
Yes, I worked under the name of Devilon Satana. Everybody said, "Your last name's so evil, you should have something to match." But then there was a gal working next door to the club that I worked at, and her name was Santana. My brother wound up marrying her, as a matter of fact. He was with her for several years, and then got divorced and went on to bigger and better things.

Mike told me, "Get rid of the name of Devilon and use your own. Your own name is pretty." I then became known as Tura Satana.

Were you getting a following then?
Yeah. The first place he booked me was a club called The Gilded Cage, in St. Louis, Missouri, in Old Town. It was a little round stage, about maybe six feet in diameter. It was the first time I had ever danced in what you call a round.

Now, you said all this was legitimate dancing, and "I was doing this kind of dancing." But it seems to me, just looking at the history, that burlesque was sort of legitimate.
No, back then, back in the 50s, burlesque was not like the vaudeville days. Because you had dancers like Rose LaRose, who did flashing and

stuff like that, and Princess Do May. They did flashing in the theaters.

But this was before I got into the theater. I went from St. Louis to Pensacola, Florida; and Little Rock, Arkansas; Biloxi, Mississippi; and Shreveport, Louisiana. Little towns like that.

Were there any dancers who really impressed you?
Yeah, one was Stunning Smith, the lady with the purple hair. She was really very beautiful. Very statuesque, and everything she wore was in purple, lavender. When I first went into burlesque theater, she was on the bill with me. She was the co-star. The star was Princess Do May, Stunning Smith was the co-star, and I was the extra added attraction.

After she watched my first show, Stunning said, "Oh, wow, you've got talent! What you have to do is learn how to use your stage." I told her, "Well, like what? What do you suggest I do?" She said, "You have a whole stage out there. That stage belongs to you. You see that stage? Use it. Don't just stay in the middle. Don't just stay on the side. Don't just stay on the runway. Use that stage. That's what it's there for. Make them pay attention to what you're doing."

Had you started adopting any special, unique outfits?
That's when I started with the Oriental dancing, the Oriental costumes.

Would the music also have an Oriental flair?
At first, no. But then I had music written for me, which I still have, called The Lure Of Tura and Go, Tura. They're for a band of about sixteen pieces. I have the complete orchestration.

So this is probably when you started using tassels.
Right.

I've always wondered, how do those stay on?
Spirit gum. They're glued on.

Must be kind of terrible taking them off.
Yeah, you wind up losing a little skin here and there.

Were you also doing tricks with your tassels?
Yes. That's something I taught myself. It got to the point where muscle control was something that was very easy for me, because you're taught to control your muscles in martial arts. And so it was fairly easy for me to do that.

Were you seventeen at this time? Eighteen?
Let's see, when I got into burlesque I was going on eighteen.

You met a fairly famous rock'n'roll singer during this period. Where did you meet him?
In Chicago. I was performing at the Follies Theater, and he was in the back row of the theater. Mostly sailors were in the front row. The Follies Theater was great for having sailors and soldiers and all kinds of servicemen come in there. He got a kick out of the fact that I took one sailor's hat and spun it around on my boob.

But he also got a kick out of the acrobatics that I did. It intrigued him, and he eventually asked the owner, Augie, if he would introduce us. So Augie brought him backstage to my dressing room and introduced me to him. And of course I recognized who he was. And I said, "What can I do for you?" And he said, "I want you to teach me how you do that." I said, "Teach you how I do what?" And he said, "How you do some of the tumbles that you do and the shimmy that you do. You do

Satansweiber
von Tittfield
Tura Satana · Haji · Lori Williams · Susan Bernard · Stuart Lancaster · Paul Trinka
Regie: Russ Meyer · Eine EVE-Produktion der RUSS MEYER ASSOCIATES, Hollywood
Constantin-Film

German poster and [next page] Lori Williams, Haji, and Tura Satana from *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*

OWU 497

Die Satansweiber von Tittfield

German lobby card for *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*

it with one leg and then with two legs, and then you do it all over the body." He said, "I want to know how you do that. I can't twirl the tassels, but I would like to know how you do that."

Didn't he travel around with an entire entourage?
Yes, he did. But when he wanted to be alone, he could do it. He used to like to go to burlesque theaters. He liked to watch the girls do their routines, the bumps and grinds. He used to incorporate some of that into his own act.

Were you somewhat special in his eyes; that he would come up and ask how you were doing your moves?
Yeah, it was because of all the acrobatics and stuff that I did in my routine that drew him. He wanted to know how to do certain moves and stuff like that. I told him a lot of it has to do with my martial arts training, and he said, "Martial arts?"

A lot of it has to do with the discipline and the moves from martial arts. Every martial art has a dance form, and it also has some offense and a defensive form. And I said, most of all you learn the dance form and the offence first before you ever learn anything about the defence.

You two just saw each other from time to time?
Sometimes we'd work in the same towns, and when he knew I was going to be working in a town where he was going to be, he would make sure we had time alone. He was afraid the Colonel would find out about me at first. And then when the Colonel did find out about me, he tried to talk me into signing up with him, and I told him "No, thank you." I said, "You're a control freak, and I don't let anybody control me."

So he was able to break away from the entourage in each of these cities to come see you.
It would take a little doing, but he would eventually say, "Hey, I just want to be alone for a while." And there were times when they would let him alone.

We'd spend a lot of time on the telephone, because for being so popular, he was a very lonely person.

Were you feeling a little special, that someone like Elvis Presley would be so

enamored with you? Or did that impress you at all?
Yes, it did. It impressed me. And the fact that he was very special. He treated me like I was made of porcelain.

Did he ever want anything to become more serious?
Oh, yeah. He asked me to marry him a year after we met. At first I almost said yes. Actually, I did say yes, and then I told him 'no' later. I still have the ring he gave me. I told him, "As much as I love you, and as much as I would love to be with you, I can't stand the Colonel. I don't think that he and I would get along, and I know you can't break your career away from him right now, because he's the one that's getting you going." Of course, he was robbing Elvis blind, but...

I told him, "Right now, you're on the rise. You're in the public's eye, and you're doing well. And the Colonel's going to make you go even more. You've been to Hollywood once, and now you're going back. If you and I got married, or if you and I let it be known that we were engaged, then your career would take a dump." I said, "I'm not as good in the public eye as you are, because I'm a stripper." I said, "Even though I've been on a television show they would still put you down because of me."

His mom understood what I was trying to explain to him. She backed me up on it. She said, "She's right. You guys could always get married later, but not now."

Did you stay in touch at all after that?
Occasionally. He would call me when he was really depressed. And I finally had to call him and tell him to leave Priscilla alone.

Why is that?
Because he was making her look like me. He made her start wearing her makeup like I did. Only she put it on really heavy, because she wanted her eyes to slant more. She continued with that look for a while, but then eventually he backed off.

After having a relationship with someone in another part of show business, did you feel you wanted to try something else in showbiz?
I was working at the Follies Theater in downtown L.A. but I had already started doing other things in show business. I had done a couple of television shows. One of the guys from Warner Bros. came down, because he heard about a big-busted Oriental, and he wanted to see if it was true. He sent his card back and told me to come to Warner Bros., and they wanted me to read for a part in Hawaiian Eye, which was my first TV show. That's how I got my Guild card.

Anthony Eisley, from Hawaiian Eye would later show up in Doll Squad for Ted Mikels. I also had roles in Man from U.N.C.L.E., Girl from U.N.C.L.E., The Greatest Show on Earth, and Burke's Law.

Which U.N.C.L.E. episodes were you on?
In The Man from U.N.C.L.E., I was in the episode The Finny Foot Affair (11/24/64) and one of the guest stars was a very young Kurt Russell. I played a female spy and heavy in that show. In The Girl from U.N.C.L.E., I was in The Moulin Ruse Affair (1/17/67) and I played Rabbit, the leader of the female guards in the house of the sinister villain Dr Toulouse, played by Shelley Berman.

Were you treated pretty fairly working on the television shows?
Yes, actually in the television industry it didn't matter that I was Oriental, except that I was a big-busted Oriental, and there very seldom were any of those around.

Did you have a separate agent for the film and TV roles?
Yes. I got a guy by the name of Murray Weintraub. His brother is Sy Weintraub.

So you continued in burlesque for a while?
Yes. I refused to be a starving actress.

And then you got the Suzette Wong role in Irma La Douce.
At the time, I was working at the Pink Pussycat, the nightclub for strippers back then, in West Hollywood. Along with Chuck Landis' nightclub, and The Body Shop. There were three of them.

Billy Wilder and his wife, Audrey, came in one night and they saw my show. Audrey told him that he had

finally found the girl to play Suzette Wong. We always got along and had a great working relationship.

In the trailer for the movie, but not in the movie, you do a tassel swing in the paddy wagon, in front of Jack Lemmon.

I've got pictures of Billy Wilder holding my tassels while I'm standing with the other girls. Billy Wilder loved to film me, he was constantly filming me. Even though his girlfriend, Hope Holliday, was on the film, they were not as close as they used to be. Billy always was trying to get me in front of the

German lobby card for *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*

Die
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camera. And Hope got to the point where she got a little disgusted with it.

When you get rounded up along with all the other girls into the paddy wagon with Jack Lemmon you have a few lines with him. But at the police station everyone empties out of the paddy wagon, but you're not in the shot!
Yeah, I know. I broke my leg. When they did the scene where everybody fell in the paddy wagon, they all fell on my legs.

It looked like you were at least inside the police station.
They shot me in the police station, but you'll notice you never see below my waist. They took care of me. And even though you didn't see below my waist, nine times out of ten, I was always there in the spotlight. And eventually my leg healed, and I was able to do the bar scenes and stuff like that, where we were dancing and singing and stuff.

And then you had a role in Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed?
Yeah, I played the dancer in the Tijuana Nightclub. I also did the choreography for Carol Burnett because she did a strip-tease after me. We all had a lot of fun. I'm still good friends with the director, Danny Mann.

How did you become associated with Russ Meyer?
When I was doing Irma La Douce, I got a call to come and read for Russ, from my agent. I said, "As long as I don't have to do any nude shots, fine." I knew that he was a soft porn director at that time. I said, "Well, we're doing the final scenes for Irma La Douce right now. I don't have time to change out of my costume." And I went to do the interview in my Irma La Douce wedding costume.

In that pink wedding dress?
Actually, I had two costumes there. I was in pink in the end. You know, there's three different renditions of the end of Irma La Douce: I was in a blue costume in one of the endings.

Did you read the script for Faster, Pussycat before you said yes?
Yeah, I did read it, but it was a cold reading. I went in there and looked at the script. And I'm in this pink wedding outfit and, you know, it makes it a little hard to be a bitch when you're in pink.

When I read it, I said, "She sounds like she's a tough, but how do you want her played?" And he said, "How would you play her?" And I said, "Well, I would probably make her kind of feminine, but also a bitch on wheels." He said, "Read it for me." So I read it for him, and he said, "You are definitely Varla."

Did Russ feel he needed to do much directing with you?
Russ did hardly any directing. Usually he let us even throw in our own lines sometimes, because we didn't follow the script totally. I have the original script, even with all the notations in it. The original script was called Leather Girls.

It's an incredible role that you created.
A lot of it was the anger from when I was younger, when I went to school and stuff like that. I called on a lot of that when I did Varla.

As soon as it starts, you're on the stage, and then you're in the car, with that laugh—
[Tura laughs that laugh!]

I never get tired of the movie. I have no clue how many times I've seen it.
The funny part about it is, every time you watch it, you see something new that you missed the first time.

Tura as one of Shirley MacLaine's bridesmaids in *Irma La Douce*.

Russ' camera work is just incredible.
Oh, the camera work was fantastic; it was all done with stationary cameras. He didn't have any dollies on the cameras. Even when I was riding over the railroad ties, the camera was sitting on the hood of the truck, and so was Russ.

Where did Haji and Lori Williams come from?
Haji had done Motor Psycho, so Russ knew her. And I knew her because she was a dancer. We worked together in a nightclub called The Losers. At the time, Haji didn't know I was working in films. Haji and I worked together, and she might have mentioned me to him, but it was my agent calling him that got me the job. It felt like it was going to be a very small job. I did the whole thing as camp. Just had a good time.

How much were you paid for your time on that film?
We were paid scale, $350 a week, for four weeks.

Did you have any points in the film at all?
No, I haven't even got any residuals for it, because it's never been shown on TV.

How is Susan Bernard, the goodie-goodie girl?
She's still alive.

What was it like on the set with her?
It was interesting.

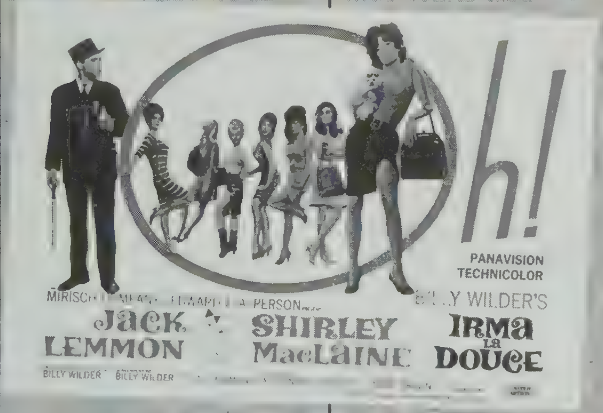
You and Haji and Lori all had those characters down, and Susan's character seemed to come from a different background.
Oh, definitely. Most definitely. Her mother was on the set for the first week. And you know what they say about Hollywood mothers. See, her father was originally Bernard of Hollywood, the photographer. She manages his business now. Her father's dead, and I guess her mother's dead, too. Now her son's a producer and director.

But it was like she had nothing to draw from. So in order for me to get any reaction from her, and in order for Russ to be able to keep her in the film, I thought, "I'm going to have to make this girl hate me, or be very afraid of me, because otherwise I'm getting nothing from her."

We're talking, and it's like she's reading the lines from a book. It was just this very monologue type thing. Just very monotone, like there was no feeling there. When she first comes out on the set with "Somebody mention my figure?" and all that other stuff, it was almost sappy. When she first starts out, she's very very blah about the whole thing. And then afterwards, I get her to the point where she is literally afraid of me.

In the commentary on the laserdisc, Russ says that you came up to him and said, "I need some dick."
No, I told him, "I need to get laid."

Russ had a rule. His rule was that during filming nobody has sex, except him. And I said, "No, no, no, no. I can't work like that." And he said, "What do you mean, you can't work like that?" I said, "I need it every night." He said, "You what?" And he said, "Who would you do it with?" And I said, "Certainly not you." And he said, "Well, how are you going to find somebody to go to bed with every night out in the middle of the desert?" I said, "I'll find somebody. But if I can't have sex every night, then you aren't going to like the performance I put out." And he said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "I have to be relaxed." And he said, "What do you mean, you have to be relaxed?" I said, "It relaxes me." And so he was very upset about that. And he said, "Well, okay. Just this once." The girls didn't know anything about it.



I chose the assistant director, Gil Haimson. And I did thoroughly use that poor man.

The film didn't work when it first came out.
No, when it first came out, it did not make any money. The film was before its time. Women were still considered stay-at-home people. They were supposed to be obedient to their husbands, and make sure the dinner was ready, the kids were changed, everybody was clean, all the laundry was done, and the house was neat. And you had to come out looking like a fashion queen to serve dinner.

It was one of those things where people were afraid, actually. They were afraid of what it would

Tura as the tasselated Suzette Wong on the UK quad poster, and the original pose [right], from Billy Wilder's film *Irma La Douce*.

do. And the movie did do quite a bit. I think it was the start of the female liberation movement.

Did you notice it playing in theaters?
Oh, yeah. I had people who knew me from dancing sending me flyers and advertisements from different areas of the country.

All the fighting at the end of the movie, when you're wrestling? That's all in the script, right?

Tura, beaming, in Ted V. Mikels' *The Astro-Zombies*.

No. We improvised all that.

Did you rehearse it at all with Ray Barlow?
Yeah. I had to rehearse it with him. As hard as we tried to get all the rocks out from underneath us when we were doing all the falls and stuff, we always found some. At least with Paul Trinka, the fights were more realistic, whereas with Ray Barlow, I literally had to carry him through every throw, every fall. I had to literally place him down on the ground, because he was afraid of getting hurt. Wuss.

***Our Man Flint*, your dancing stint in there, was that after *Faster, Pussycat*?**
Yes.

I read that you actually were both dancers.
Yes, I was.

The hair was different, but I noticed your legs.
Yes, you did. The legs are hard to miss, huh?

How did you go from Russ Meyer to Ted Mikels?
Ted Mikels saw me in 59 when I was working at the Silver Slipper in Las Vegas as a dancer. He fell in love with me when I was dancing. He happened to be there the night that this gal threw this huge, heavy crystal ashtray at me, and just barely missed my head.

Why did she do that?
Because her boyfriend was watching me dancing. I came off that stage and I had her up against the wall, and one of the security guards tried to grab me, and I told him, "Don't grab my arms." Well, I decked him, put him out, and still had her up against the wall. The other security guards are backing off, and I said, "Never grab my arms!"

I told her, "What the hell do you think you're doing?" And she said, "Well, my boyfriend was watching you while you were on stage." And I said, "Well, what did you come in here for?" And she said, "We came in to see the show, and we heard you were good." And I said, "Then what's your problem?" She said he was too interested in watching me.

And I said, "Well, honey, let me put it to you this way: You are going home with him. You're going to be able to have sex with him. You're going to get lucky tonight because of this." I said, "I'm not going to do that. I don't want him. I don't even want to have sex with him. So he's all yours. So who's going to benefit from his watching me, if not you?"

She said, "Oh, I didn't think about that." I just bounced her off the wall once and banged her head against it, and I said "Think about it!" And then I let her go, and of course the security guards escorted them out.

Did Ted approach you that night?
No, he stood in the background and watched everything. And that's when he started writing the script about Satana. He got so moved by the power that came off the stage, apparently, that that's what turned him on. We didn't actually meet until I came in for a reading for Astro-Zombies about six or seven years later.

He also looked like he had a much bigger budget on Doll Squad.
Yeah, he had a little bit more. Astro-Zombies, actually, he had more of a budget there because Wayne Rogers and Kenneth Altose were supposedly his co-producers. But they wound up screwing him out of money and screwing everybody else who played in the movie out of money. I never got any residuals for that one, and I never got any residuals for Doll Squad.

And you brought them Francine York also.
Uh-huh.

Why didn't Ted have you in the lead role for Doll Squad?
I think he was afraid that his girlfriend, Sherri Vernon, who was also in the film, would be upset. She was already a little upset, because I was in the film and Ted has always had this fixation about me.

He always had a thing for me, which kind of disturbed her for some reason. Why, I don't know, because I wasn't sleeping with him at the time or anything like that. She was doing that. Her and several other girls.

I'm the type of person, I don't believe in sharing my man. If I meet a guy, I stay with him, and I stay with him, period. And he better do the same, or I'm gone.

Did she also live in his castle? Did you ever visit him there?
Yes. I was at the castle, even before he had all the ladies there. I especially liked the dungeon that he had there. There were a few torture devices, like a rack and something like an iron maiden. He also had a mannequin named Laura that looked like me and wore my shoes from Astro-Zombies. Nothing like being obvious, is there?

Sounds like a good place to make a movie.
As far as I know, he's never used the castle in a movie, although he might have in some of the other movies, like some of the other ones that came after that, like Girl in Gold Boots.

The costumes were great. It's funny that these green costumes were your spy outfits.
Sherri Vernon made them. She was the seamstress on the film, also. They were green because we were supposed to blend into the scenery.

You seemed a lot smaller in the film than you had been in previous films.
Well, I was thinner then, yeah. I was working for the police department as a radio patrol dispatcher. It was a very nerve wracking job. You never knew when one of the policemen would wind up getting shot. I was constantly working on my nerves, adrenalin. That's the worst part of being somebody like that, and being somebody who has a lot of empathy, which is me. I feel and I fear for them at the same time. So that's how I wound up losing all the weight. It was just stress. Just pure stress.

What was your last year as a dancer?
My last year as a dancer was, I think, 72. It was for Harold Minsky at the Aladdin Hotel, a big showroom.

Did you have a splashier final night, or was it pretty much a regular show?
We had a very large audience there for the final night. It was pretty much a regular show. I did my normal routine. I was doing the acrobatics and stuff like that, and I was twirling the tassels. Twirling the tassels was a big hit with a lot of

the ladies in the audience. And the guys, of course.

You've also been a nurse.
Right. I did that for about twelve years. It was before I became a full-fledged strip-dancer. I got into nursing when I was still in high school. I enjoyed taking care of people, and I worked as a nurse's aide. And while I was dancing, I was going to nursing school.

I took it up again after dancing, when I decided it was time for me to retire, because I've got two kids I've got to watch. Basically, that was what that was. I decided I was going to have to renew my nursing career.

And you had that job when you ended up being shot.
Uh-huh.

How did that happen?
There was a druggy that one of the doctors had turned in to the police. When he got out of jail, he came looking for the doctor because he was going to shoot him. Unfortunately, the doctor didn't work that night, so he shot whoever was handy, and that happened to be me. He shot twice. He only hit me once, in the stomach. Everybody else ducked and ran. He shot me in the stomach, but it was a .25 automatic, so it just bounced off my spine. It did a dance in the intestines and bounced off all the innards, and eventually wound up lodging itself in my left hip.

And then soon after that you had a car accident.

Yeah, in 81. Just some guy who was driving around without a license, without insurance, without current tags on his vehicle. He hit me doing about sixty miles an hour in a twenty-five-mile-an-hour zone.

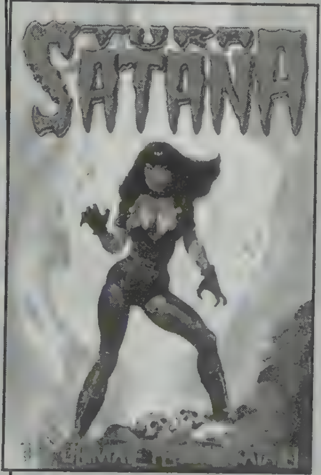
Were you fully laid out? Could you move at all?
I spent two years in the hospital. I broke my back. I could move my head, but that was about it. After the cervical surgery, I had feeling back in my hands. Prior to that, my hands would move, but I couldn't hold onto anything. They told me I'd never walk again. And I told them, "You want to bet?"

The doctor told me that immediately, the first day I was in the hospital. And I told him, "Not only will I walk again, doc, but I'm going to do everything else I used to do." And I pretty much do everything else I used to do, except I can't do some of the moves in the martial arts that I used to do.

That's what kept me from being a total cripple. If I hadn't done those things beforehand, I probably would have been a basket case or a quadriplegic, or even a partial quad. But luckily enough my spinal cord was tough enough, and the muscles around my spinal cord were strong enough to withstand so much of the damage. Once the doctors removed the bone spurs and the bone chips and stuff like that, it was a lot easier to move. I still have a few floating in there, but it's not bad.

Mark of the Astro-Zombies. Even though it was a little bit of a different movie, you definitely got some good Tura Satana stuff going on in there.
Yeah, it was a very sedate movie. There are not a lot of good moves in there, but I think I die well. I always seem to die well.

And you kill well.
Yeah. When I kill, I make a point to do it with drama.



I read you had an engine-rebuilding business.
I don't have that anymore. My third husband was the one who was the engine rebuilder, and I would help out periodically. Pretty much I can listen to an engine and tell most of the stuff that's wrong with it.

How did you meet him?
He was one of my patients at the doctor's office. He was a police officer from LAPD. He worked in communications, and he had gotten shot during the riots, the Watts riots, and had damage done to his heart. Got shot in the heart and in the arm.

One day one of his buddies found him on the floor, so they brought him in to us to take a look at. And the doctor I worked for said, "It's time to put him in the hospital." Because he had had a heart attack.

How long were you two married?
We were married for almost nineteen years.

And I have read, unfortunately, that he did pass away.
Yes, he did. He was in the hospital. He had had open-heart surgery about five months before. He had a quadruple bypass and he started developing a really bad cough and wasn't getting any sleep. So he went into the hospital for a checkup, and he called me up and he said, "I'm ready to come home."

And I said, "Okay, I'll come and get you." On the way there, I got a call from the doctor's assistant, that hemmed and hawed for about ten minutes. I finally asked him, "Are you trying to tell me my husband died?" And he said, "Yes."

So I got to the hospital, my sister-in-law and brother-in-law were there. He had passed away while he was talking to his roommate. Apparently his pacemaker never kicked in, and he just had a massive heart attack. He died in 2000. He died

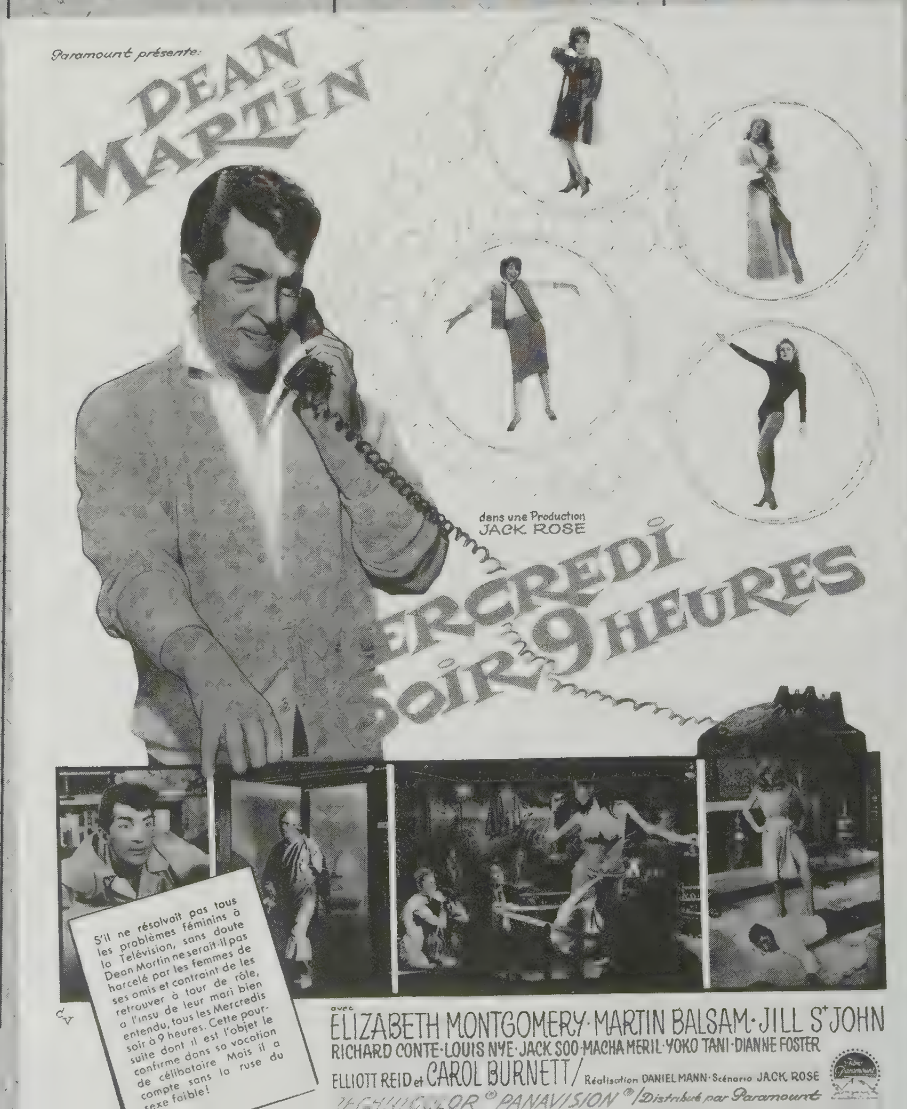
Previous page: Tura palling around with nightclub entertainer and *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* star Noel Harrison. This page: *Tura Satana* comic #1.

four days before his birthday, October 15th. My sister Asentath passed away one month after my husband died. She passed away November 30th, one day after her birthday.

Are you sharing your home with anyone today?
Nope. I'm okay with being alone. I have a lot of friends around here, and I do a lot of traveling back and forth. And I have the email I answer on my website that I get quite often during the day. I've had the website since about 96.

When did you become aware that you were a cultural icon?
I did the tribute to Ted Mikels in downtown L.A. And when they found out I was going to be there, they also rented Faster, Pussycat and showed that. I think it was about 83, I guess, because I think I was walking on crutches or on a walker. I'm not sure. I was still recuperating.

Back then, I was so astounded to see kids who were sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years old. They knew the film; they knew me. And I said, "How in the heck do you know me? I haven't


Paramount présente:
DEAN MARTIN
dans une Production JACK ROSE
MERCREDI SOIR 9 HEURES
S'il ne résolvait pas tous les problèmes féminins à la Télévision, sans doute Dean Martin ne serait-il pas harcelé par les femmes de ses amis et contraint de les retrouver à tour de rôle, à l'insu de leur mari bien entendu, tous les Mercredis soir à 9 heures. Cette poursuite dont il est l'objet le confirme dans sa vocation de célibataire Mais il a compté sans la ruse du sexe faible!
avec
ELIZABETH MONTGOMERY · MARTIN BALSAM · JILL St JOHN
RICHARD CONTE · LOUIS NYE · JACK SOO · MACHA MERIL · YOKO TANI · DIANNE FOSTER
ELLIOTT REID et CAROL BURNETT
Réalisation DANIEL MANN · Scénario JACK ROSE
TECHNICOLOR® PANAVISION® / Distribué par Paramount

been in the public eye for God knows how long." And they said, "Oh, this film is so fantastic. You don't know what a following you have." And I said, "No, I don't."

That's when I decided to get on the internet. Especially after Russ and I went to Paris together to re-release Faster, Pussycat in the theaters and on video over there.

The film is huge all over Europe. I did a tour of Europe last year. I took Haji and Lori with me. And the fans were so fantastic. They knew the lines to the movie by heart. And when the three of us were there, I did some improvisations of some of the scenes, and nine times out of ten one of us would do the lines of whoever else was supposed to be there in the scene.

And it was interesting because the fans knew the minute we changed something. But they were all in their late teens and early twenties. I think the oldest person there was in his fifties.

You've been writing an autobiography.

Yeah, I'm still in the 50s. I'm still talking about Elvis and me. And I have Tony Bennett in there. I met Tony back in the 50s when I first started dancing, and we hit it off very well. We've kept in touch over many, many years.

Any words to live by?

One of the things that I always said, and it was one of my father's favorite sayings, "Always be good to the people on the way up, because you're going to meet them on the way down." I have always lived by that philosophy.

The one thing that you've got to remember is that you just never accept defeat. Remember to never let life get you down, because there is always something new to learn tomorrow. Life is to be lived and lived well." ⊙

Previous page and this page: Tura in *Who's Been Sleeping In My Bed?* starring Dean Martin.

Gaspar Noé in New York,
November 2003.
Photo Shade Rupe.

THE RUMORS of the work of Gaspar Noé came through early. Mitch Davis of Fantasia put the buzz in and by the time of the New York Film Festival screening, I Stand Alone was at the top of the list. I first met Gaspar that evening and we settled down later in Manhattan for a longer interview, the director of Irreversible found an hour in-between scouting locations for Enter the Void and other work.

We had a second portion to our interview, about twenty more minutes recorded later in Paris, which sadly got erased in my bag on my way back home to the States. Still some nice words were remembered, like how they took over the tunnel in Irreversible and painted it red, and left it that way; and how, if you try to bend your filmmaking towards an American marketing demographic, you are dead. Ah, Gaspar!

* * *

GASPAR NOÉ

★★★★★
"AN ELECTRIFYING, INCENDIARY, ADRENALINE-SOAKED MASTERPIECE"
The Scotsman
SEUL CONTRE TOUS
A FILM BY GASPAR NOE
I STAND ALONE
★★★★
"LEAVES YOU GASPING FOR AIR"
I-D
★★★★ "STUNNING" Empire
CRITICS' PRIZE
CANNES FILM FESTIVAL
1998
18

SHADE RUPE: You're from Argentina?

GASPER NOÉ: I was born in Argentina.

When did you move to New York?

My parents moved to the United States maybe three months after I was born. My father had a Guggenheim grant for painters, and so he came here for two or three years. At the same time he was painting he was selling a little bit. At the time, my mother was working as a social worker.

You were living here in Manhattan?

Yeah. I've been told the first apartment we were living in was on Broadway, just behind the Angelika Film Center. But then we moved to another place on the West Side. Maybe it was 59th Street or more north, 70th Street. I don't know which avenue, but somewhere on the West Side.

You were so young then. Do you remember very much of New York?

Yeah, I can remember moments. You always remember events in your apartment. I remember watching Jason and the Argonauts on TV. That really freaked me out. The first memory I have of watching a movie was Jason and the Argonauts.

That's cool you were even able to see it on TV.

I was born in 63, so I suppose that memory was when I was four years old. That was at the end of 68. The memories I have from Europe are from 68, 69.

And then your parents moved to France?

UK video box artwork by The Chapman

No, then they moved back to Argentina.

You were about five years old then?
Yeah. I guess I was five, and then I forgot all my English, because when I arrived there I had an English accent, so kids would make fun of me. Saying, "You damn Yankee, here's the Yankee section." Suddenly I decided to erase anything I learned from one day to the next, and I then only started speaking in Spanish.

And then maybe six years later, there was a dictatorship in Argentina, so my father had to run away first, and then my mother stayed there for a few additional months. And then we left the country entirely.

What was happening in Argentina?
There was a coup d'etat, and a dictator came in. Lots of these people who were left-wing artists were disappearing and ending up in concentration camps and being cut to pieces just for being left-wing artists.

Wow. Were you in Buenos Aires?
Yeah.

That's a little intense. And you knew what was going on? You knew that this was happening?
Yeah, of course.

So then you went to France after that.
My father was already in France, maybe ten years. He moved to France because he had many friends. Mainly because he didn't want to rehash his New York experience. He said: I'm done with New York. So he wanted to go back to France, so he went to France, and then my mother also went.

Why did your mom stay behind for a few months?
Because when my father had to run away, faster than my mom, it was more risky for him than for my mother. And also because my mother had to put things together. You don't leave your apartment just like that. You have to prepare, put your stuff somewhere in a basement, and then go. So we stayed for nine more months, and then we took a boat to France.

How old were you then?
Twelve.

And your teenage years were all in Paris.
Yeah. I was really a film buff because, when I was nine, I met this guy who had maybe three uncles who were projectionists in different cinemas, and his grandfather was selling tickets in one of the main cinemas in Buenos Aires.

They knew all the other people working in all the other theaters around. So we could go to see movies once or twice a day for free, because even for the movies which were forbidden under fourteen or eighteen years old, the grandfather would just call: "My grandson wants to see such a movie. Can he go?" They were careful and they would put us somewhere in the theater so we could see the movie. So we were watching all these forbidden movies from the age of nine to twelve. And I got addicted to cinema at that time.

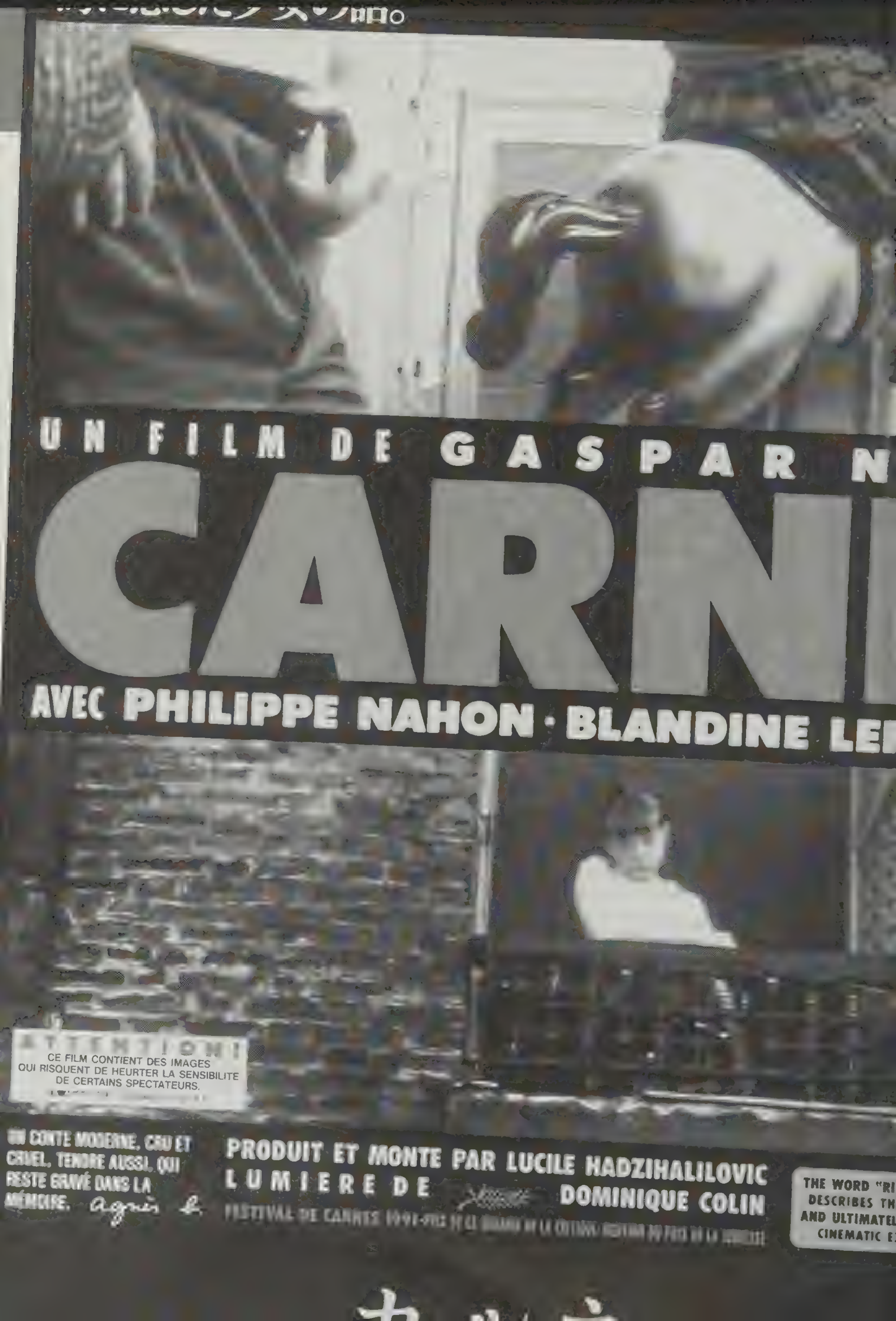
Now, when you say 'forbidden,' do you mean forbidden in Buenos Aires?
No, no, it was forbidden for kids, because they were banned and they were restricted.

R-rated films?
Yeah. A movie that is R-rated, a kid can go and see it here in America.

If accompanied with a parent.
In most countries, it's different. It doesn't matter who you go to see the movie with, you cannot see a movie that is forbidden if you're under fourteen, you have to show your ID. If you're under fourteen, you can't get in, and if you're under eighteen, you have to be eighteen to get in.

So some people lie, some people do fake credentials. Mostly if you know the people who run the theater, they just put you wherever. They know no inspector would find you.

Actually, nowadays this sounds stupid, because most kids can just rent the DVD from anywhere. So it's not as hard to see these films as it was when we were kids. Anything that was even slightly risqué, with guns or things like that, it was always restricted.


UN FILM DE GASPAR N
CARN
AVEC PHILIPPE NAHON · BLANDINE LE
ATTENTION!
CE FILM CONTIENT DES IMAGES
QUI RISQUENT DE HEURTER LA SENSIBILITE
DE CERTAINS SPECTATEURS.
UN CONTE MODERNE, CRU ET CRUEL, TENDRE AUSSI, QUI RESTE GRAVÉ DANS LA MÉMOIRE. agnès b.
PRODUIT ET MONTE PAR LUCILE HADZIHALILOVIC
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I don't understand what they're restricting, really. How many kids are growing up and picking up a gun because they saw the movie?
I know when I went to see some of the kung fu movies, or even when kung fu was playing on TV, after the movie would end, if it was a risqué movie, you would come out jumping, sort of jumping and screaming. And you felt like doing martial arts.

Which means that it was exciting for a boy of my age to see those movies, because then you thought you would enjoy fighting, physically. Which means, yeah, it can affect. But really, movies with guns don't push you to use guns.

No. Because you're going to have to do a lot more work. You're going to have to go find it, you're going to have to load it, you're going to have to carry it somewhere.
But it's true that porn movies, if they're well done, bring me to have a testosterone rush that brings me to feel like fucking, when they're working.

I think most people probably end up masturbating before going out and having sex, though. Like I think you might feel like experiencing good feelings in your crotch, but everything you have to do afterwards, there's so much work.

In the movie, it looks really easy. It's like: Oh, look, there's the girl, there's the guy. Oh, they're taking their clothes off and fucking. But if you want to go fuck, it's a lot more work than just going into a room and there's a girl there.

If you want to go fuck, you're going to have to go to a bar, get drunk with someone that wants to be with you. By the time that starts happening, then whatever's gotten you excited from the movie... It's like the other stuff has to already be in place.
Also, masturbation is the cheapest drug, and maybe the best. When people smoke joints, when people do heroin or morphine, it's like having a serotonin rush. The easiest way to have a serotonin rush that will make you feel lazy afterwards, but also feel good, is good masturbation.

Except for the people who feel guilty about it. But those people are always going to feel pretty bad anyway.
I know that idea. Especially when you're a teenager, you feel guilty when you masturbate, because then sometimes you can masturbate so many times a day, twice or three times a day, and then you go to school and you go to the toilets in the school, you masturbate and you come back. You feel sleepy afterwards.

It's just like it brings you down and you don't feel intelligent. But the problem is, also, if you don't do it, you're always thinking about that. So you have to find your equilibrium.

Gaspar and Phillipe Nahon.

I don't know what the laws are in Paris, as far as seeing films, but I know that a fourteen-year-old can have a glass of wine and there's no problem. And that I believe that teenagers and adults can have sexual relations, and it's not a problem.
Teenagers above sixteen, yeah. People above sixteen can fuck whoever they want. I'm not

sure, but I heard, I've been told, but you should check. I heard that people under twenty-one can have sex with people who are fifteen. But from fifteen to sixteen, you can have sex with people of your own age, but if you're above twenty-one, you cannot have sex with someone—

Isn't that strange? I think: Who's deciding these weird laws?

Also twenty-one, you think that Dostoevsky had a twelve-year-old girl. It's this thing of the twentieth-century.

Yeah, it's very recent that all this has happened.

On teenagers, France is controlling child abuse and making sure these kids can't be abused. But teenagers, sometimes they have this sort of—I suppose I started masturbating when I was thirteen, so you have sexual desire from thirteen on.

And then you're just telling somebody: Don't think that way. Don't do that. It's really bad in America, because they start really early. We're identified by our genitalia when we're born. When you're a baby, you are a boy or a girl. You're known by your penis or by your vagina. That's your identity.

And when you're old enough to start, like six or whatever, playing with it or whatever, it's "Don't touch it! Don't play with it!" And you're supposed to hide yourself, and you're not supposed to touch yourself or talk about yourself. And everyone grows up fucked up, being told the physical center of their being, their identity, is bad.

One thing shocks me, in America—most men are circumcised. When people do it for religious reasons, you say, well, it's very old-fashioned. But it comes from a previous time where maybe people wouldn't take showers every day. But most Americans are circumcised.

I say, "Why?" I'm not circumcised. In France, no one is circumcised besides those who have to do it for religious reasons. But I don't know why in America. It's just like, since the beginning you are kind of in control of your own kids' authority. Or the whole society had to have a control.

It's maybe even symbolic. It doesn't really change the future sexual life of the guy, but just like a feeling of controlling. It's like it's much easier to show a dick on a screen in Europe than to show it on a screen here, even non-American, because how many movies have shown dicks here that aren't NC-17 or R-rated? Maybe six, seven.

In France, a movie like Kubrick's Eyes Wide Shut, the uncut version, the unmodified version, was a general audience movie. Kids could go and see it. In France, they don't consider sex as being dangerous. It's more like a release of the social tensions. The thinking seems to be if you go fuck more, people would be less into revolution, or something like that.

I heard that Kubrick had to blur it to get an R. In France, the uncut version was a general audience movie, that would come on at eight o'clock on TV. No one thought it was dangerous.

It was worse than blurring. And apparently Kubrick was involved in this. They digitized figures wearing coats in front of the people having sex. It was only in that sex scene at the big giant mansion.

Were they good, or can you see—?

You can't see anything.

No, but is it recognizable that they added this to the—?

No, not really, no.

It was just well done?

Let's say there are two people having sex. They digitally inserted cloaked figures standing in front of the people having sex. So you see the back of a man wearing a cloak, then you see a wiggling foot and an arm from the people he's blocking our view of.

What was the problem? Most people who go to see R-rated movies have had sex. I'm sure ninety-nine per cent. Maybe there's one per cent who are virgins, people who are over eighteen.

America is the only country they did that for. When Lars von Trier's The Idiots came to America, they chose to put big black bars

Finnish poster for *I Stand Alone*. Courtesy Mikko Aromaa.

51^{e} FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM DE CANNES
E LA SEMAINE DE LA CRITIQUE • LE "PRIX TRES SPECIAL"

AR NOE ELOKUVAN PÄÄOSASSA PHILIPPE NAHON

YKSIN KAIKKIA ASTAAN

MORAALI
HISTORIA
TRADITIO
KULTTUURI
KOULUTUS
USKONTO
LUOKKA
PERHE
PERINNE
KAUPPA
TEOLLISUUS
OMISTAMINEN
SÄÄSTÄMINEN
VEROTUS
LAINSÄÄDÄNTÖ
BYROKRATIA
PLUTOKRATIA
NEPOTISMI
HIERARKIA
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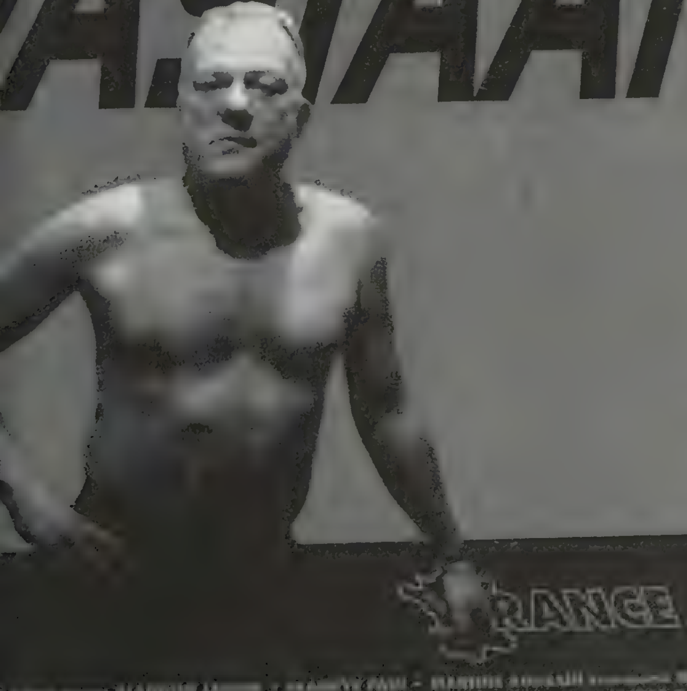

AROITUS

TÄMÄ ELOKUVA SISÄLTÄÄ KUVIA JA AJATUKSIA JOTKA SAATTAVAT KIIHDYTTÄÄ TAI JÄRKYTTÄÄ KATSOJIA. K-18

over all the penises, and big black squares over the butts.

To get an R-rating. But it's weird, because I don't think that movie could have been more successful by having an R-rating. Because it's an art movie that only adults would go to see anyway. And I'm sure that those people would have enjoyed much more watching the uncut version than the R version. Of course, if you do an action movie, maybe it makes sense if you do a big-budget action movie, they want to release it nationwide, any kind of major film multiplex.

That kind of film, you have to go for an R-rating, and then also to have all those action movies in the Blockbuster video stores. There is a law that doesn't allow them to put unrated movies in their shop. So it can make sense, but not for an art movie coming from Europe. You know that from the moment there's subtitles, you'll never be in a multiplex.

It's weird, because when I Stand Alone came out, you have the pornography in the film. There's a penis entering a vagina in the movie, and it wasn't a problem.

Yeah, but the movie was unrated. But as long as you show it in art schedules, okay, but even having that scene or any other scene, because the movie was French, it would not have been showing in a multiplex. You cannot show it in a multiplex, because it's not a movie for kids. But my movie is doing something more mature in a foreign language. It's subtitled. Why would you care about getting an R?

It's always confused everybody, exactly what you're saying. The people who are going to go to this movie have already seen films like this. They read books. They have sex. They don't mind. They're fully aware. They're not going to be offended; they're not going to be horrified. They usually read about the movie before they go. They don't just show up and

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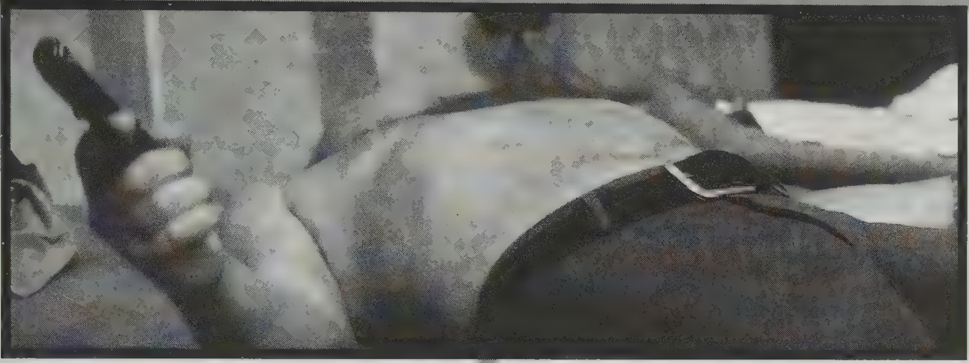
This page and next: Unhappy French people in *I Stand Alone*.



go: Oh, let's go see Seul Contre Tous. They know.

Just this morning I got a phone call from my sales agent in France who's sending out Irreversible. Singapore bought the movie, and they want to cut just one scene. They went to see the censors. The censors banned the movie for the TV and video release.

They said, we can only show it theatrically, but you have to cut the scene of the transvestite. They didn't say why. This guy called my sales agent, and said, well, we need permission to cut the transvestite scene, one scene.

Yeah, the moment we see that scene, we're seeing the transvestite's penis. And so we said, why don't they want to blur or cut the penis of the rapist that you see? Why isn't it the penis in the gay club scene that's a problem?

And really maybe they have problems with transvestites. Even if you see it slightly. You see it for maybe half a second or one second. It's not erect. And you see Vincent Cassel's penis at the end of the movie.

Maybe they have a problem with men behaving as women or maybe because they're surrounded by other countries where being a transvestite is very common, and in their culture it's not, I don't know what. They just said, well, if you want to release this movie, we have to cut that two seconds of—

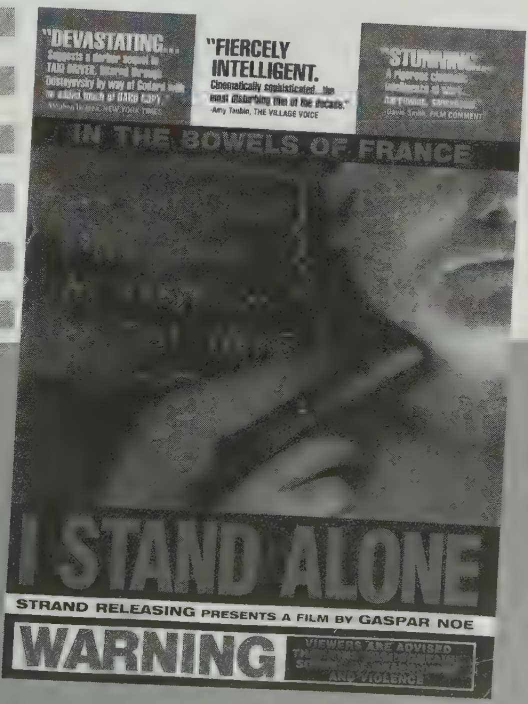
It's too important.

And it was weird that they would focus on that, because no one else in the world would have focused on that.

Have you resolved what you're going to do?

No, I just told them no, I don't want them to cut it. But if the projectionist wanted to put his hand in front of the projector, he can do that. But I'm sure, although they said that I forbid them of doing it, I'm sure they will do it. I'm not there to check it.

I've thought about that scene. The penis is so small. I think that people think that they're really seeing a woman and that they want to continue believing that they


"DEVASTATING...
"FIERCELY INTELLIGENT.
Cinematically sophisticated... the most disturbing film of the decade."
-Amy Taubin, THE VILLAGE VOICE
NEW YORK TIMES
"STUNNING...
FILM COMMENT
IN THE BOWELS OF FRANCE
I STAND ALONE
STRAND RELEASING PRESENTS A FILM BY GASPAR NOE
WARNING
VIEWERS ARE ADVISED
AND VIOLENCE

saw a woman. And so all of a sudden, it's almost so fast, it almost looks like a really big clitoris rather than a penis. And I think people just don't want to think of a vagina that way. I don't know what it is, but there's something very disturbing.

It's funny that you can have a rape scene, and then have a guy in a dress with a penis and that's the more disturbing image.

Two guys, very intelligent, told me that that was the thing that shocked them the most, was the transvestite showing his dick. I cannot understand. I don't get it. If someone says: Oh, the scariest scene is the flicker at the end of the movie, I can understand it, but not that.

You know, I didn't notice it until I saw it for the third time. Maybe I noticed it in the theater. The first two times I saw the film, I saw it in the theater. And when the flicker started happening, I just saw a flicker, and was experiencing flicker. When I saw it the third time, I noticed there's images of space in there.

Actually it's not really space, it's white spots. It's supposed to make you think of the Milky Way, but we didn't get the right image of the Milky Way. I cut in some images of white powder coming from a black ceiling. It's out of focus, but it looks like the Milky Way. You get images of it.

What were some of the major differences you noticed as a kid from living in Argentina to living in Paris?

I think that the whole way of thinking in New York was closer to the way of thinking in Argentina. And the way of thinking in France, compared to the one in Argentina. Besides changing your language. Now, America is very capitalist, a place where you have people who work in the elevators. They open the elevator and they bring you up and down. In France, you don't see anybody working inside the elevators anymore. That's slavery in a way. But you have so many people that work for nothing in America compared to all these laws that protect the workers in France.

In Argentina you have that, too. You have people who are really rich, and people who are poor, they're slaves. In France, at least they try to hide it.

The other thing about France is, they sell perfumes. America mostly sells weapons and movies. In France, what do they sell? They sell perfume, they sell clothing, fashion. They sell food. But all these things they sell, they sell them in the name of culture. So they also protect other kinds of arts, like cinema, that are not very commercial, because the French cinema doesn't sell as much as the American cinema.

But still, they help a lot. There's a French office that's helping all the directors who go to film festivals to show their movies. Because that's part of the whole way of selling France to the rest of the world. So I benefited from that when I started doing movies.

And also, for example, you have good things in France. You have the final cut if you're the director. If you get in trouble with the producer, there's no way that he can have the final cut. You just call a lawyer. The director, as long as he's not going over budget, he can decide to put whatever he wants in the movie. Even when it comes to commercials, the director who directs the commercial can have the final cut.

Will the French government actually support a filmmaker, then? Can you apply for a grant or something?

No, but then of course it becomes a kind of Mafia. If you apply for a grant, there's also a commission with eight persons inside. Most of them are already linked to the film industry, so you're part of their family or you're not. And there are different families in France.

Usually the ones who get close to the government subsidies are more arty or more like avant-garde, those kind of things. And then you have the commercial directors who don't always benefit from those subsidies. But there are also automatic subsidies that work for any kind of film.

These things are changing, but there was a glorious period, these last ten years in France, because there was a lot of money coming from Cannes, of course. Even if you weren't always going to the good movies, from time to time you would go to some good ones.

But actually, the whole channel is falling to pieces, and so I try to beware of movies nowadays. It has been proved on another side that the movies that are the most recognized abroad, outside France, are mostly movies that are considered controversial in France.

Are considered controversial in France?
Yeah, for example, my movie, it has been playing everywhere, and there are many other movies in France that were more successful commercially, but that weren't sold in one single country.

The supersexy Monica Bellucci in *Irreversible*.

So it has to upset everybody at Cannes?
Yeah, I know, because it's weird. I don't know why people are not interested in French comedies outside France. Mostly. And all the French comedies that come out every week... I think the world is more interested in German comedies or Austrian comedies now.

Hollywood likes to take French comedies that were popular in France, and then remake them for America. Like Three Men and a Baby.
Yeah.

I saw The Tall Blond Man with One Black Shoe on a double bill with Le Magnifique.
Did they do a remake of that?

I don't know if they remade Tall Blond Man but I doubt they've remade Le Magnifique. That was a great double feature from before we called single-screen theaters single-screen theaters.
Did this movie called Asterix ever came out here?

No, but I saw the posters in the French theaters in Montreal.
Asterix is the biggest success of French cinema ever inside France. It's the sequel of Asterix and Cleopatra, with Monica Bellucci. They sold thirteen million tickets in France, which is the highest ever.

How many people live in the country?
Sixty million. More than a quarter of the whole country has seen the movie. I haven't seen it, but it's the most successful movie ever in France. It will never sell here in America, even if they gave the movie for nothing to a distributor. I'm sure no one would listen.

So you went to a film school in Paris? And that's where you made your first short film, Tintorella de Luna?

Southern Hemisphere. It was summer when I left Argentina, but when I arrived in France two weeks later, because we took a boat to cross the sea, it was winter. So instead of losing six months, I earned six months on my education and my scholarship. So actually I finished all my studies at the age of seventeen, because I was advanced for my age.

And then at the age of seventeen, I got into this university with a film school, and at the age of nineteen I was done. So I already knew how to work the camera. I had already done this short film inside the film school. I was nineteen then, and I started doing many things with different directors, telling philosophies and that.

So finally I wanted to be the director and another student wanted to do the camera, and another one wanted to do the sound. So finally I did the short there.

And then, because my parents pushed me, when I was nineteen I had a screening of that short. All my friends at that time, people that I knew, of course, my friends and their kids, and everybody said: Wow. This is my way to keep on doing movies.

I suppose if you do one movie and no one cares about it, then you stop doing movies. But if you do something where you're recognized for even one thing, then you keep on doing it.

What was your next short film after Tintorella?

Three years later I did one called Pulp Amer, which means 'Bitter Pulp'. It's about a man raping his maid. It all takes place in one room. It's about a woman, she's ready to go to bed, and the man who gets into her room.

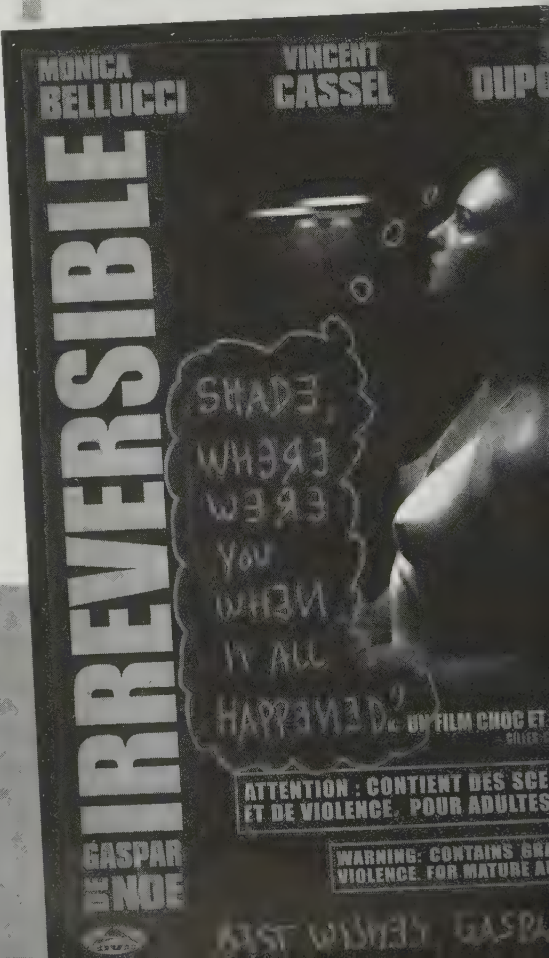
She looks twenty-five, and she's a housemaid. And the guy, who's the man of the house, gets into her room. And you see she's scared. He finally tries to kiss her, and you can see that she doesn't want to. And finally he ends up attacking her, and the movie finishes when he's just opening his zipper.

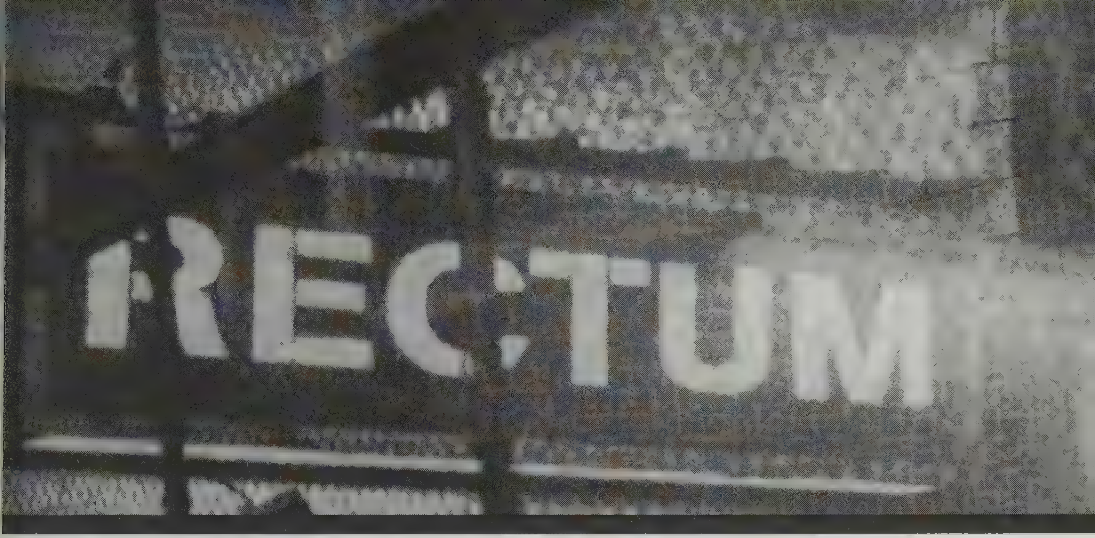
But there's a voiceover that explains how much she's going to like it, because she's poor and he's rich, and then she's going to try to steal from him. Actually, he's pretending. What you see with your eyes is that he's really abusing the girl, but in his mind he's just helping her out, and she's abusing him because she's been showing him her legs. He says how he's making her guilty of things that he's feeling from her.

Tintorella is more of a comedy.

I think it would be closer to John Waters or to Todd Solondz film. They wanted to put it on the Irreversible DVD, but because Irreversible is less funny, I said, well, it doesn't fit like that. As a bonus for this movie, it's just like, okay, it exists, but maybe I'll put it as a bonus on another movie. Another comedy.

I suppose it's more like these funny comedies like Buñuel or maybe at the time I was younger,





An inviting sign in *Irreversible.*

and things that you haven't experienced yourself. Although I haven't experienced rape myself, even if I did Irreversible. Or I haven't experienced murder myself.

But actually because I know people who've been through it, I thought just by knowing people who have been through it, I got closer to it at that time. So it's just like changing the story, but at the same time, because you're afraid of being considered as sick, or just make it funny.

Maybe at the time I was afraid of being accused. Actually I'm not afraid of being accused of anything. It's not that you do it your way because you don't have one particular way. You just try to do what you think is the best at the moment you do it. And sometimes you also want to learn about situations you don't know yourself, but you heard of them. Just putting the pieces together. Then you say: Oh, now I know what all this is about.

Was Pulp Amer made after school?
Yeah.

How did you finance that short film?
It was pretty cheap. But I was working as an assistant director.

You were working on other films?
Yeah. But it was a very cheap movie, actually. The whole movie is six minutes. The whole thing cost me maybe $5,000, but it was a lot of money for me at the time. Filming it, doing the sound mix. The film stock, the development.

Did you do it on 35mm or 16mm?
Sixteen.

How long did it take you to make that film, from beginning to end?
To prepare it was very short for me. Maybe I prepared it in two weeks. I shot it in one day, and then the sound editing, because at the time we would edit on a normal 16mm editing table. And the sound would be edited that way, too.

And because I started doing what I later did with Seul Contre Tous and Carne I'd record the voiceover, and then once to get a read of all his breaths—like there's no silence. For a movie that is six minutes long, I recorded a voiceover that was almost like fifteen minutes long.

And then I put it over on two tracks, and I would cut all the silence off and mix it together, and then just switch the places of some sentences to make it even more weird. The sound editing took me a long time. That's because shooting it was easy, but then I spent a lot of time in the darkroom. The movie was filmed maybe nine months later or one year later.

Is the title a joke also?
No. It's just the bitter pulp. Because here, when you say "pulp," you think of some particular kind of foods, or even the movies: pulp.

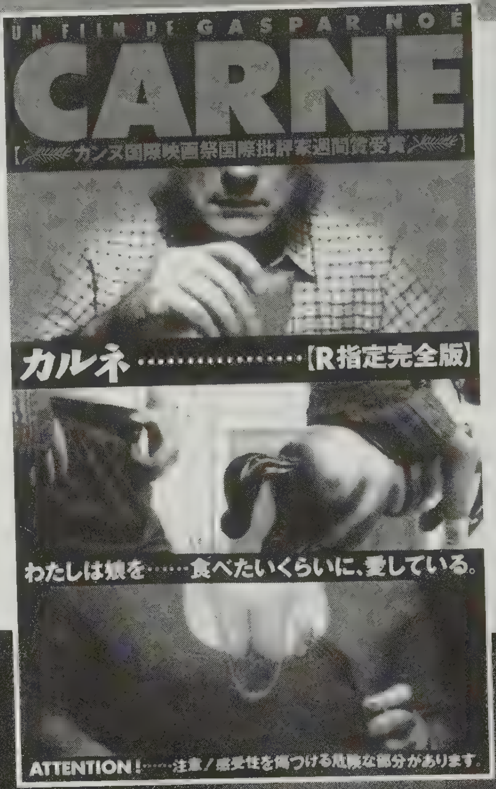
'Bitter Pulp' is more because it's like a bitter fruit, because the fruit is something you want to taste. And because he's trying to fuck the girl, at the end you say: Well, he's going to rape the girl. You know that she doesn't want it, and he pretends she's desperate for having the dick of her boss inside her.

What's the story for Tintorella?
There was a psychological test about who's responsible for the murder of a woman who lives in a small town. When her husband goes away, she goes to see her lover. She goes to see her lover, who lives on the other side of a river, and there's just one bridge. At night time, the bridge is closed because there is a murder. So she goes through the bridge during the daytime.

Then she fucks her lover, and when she comes out, it's night. And so she goes to see a man with a boat, to see if she can cross the river with the man with the boat, because she doesn't want to take the bridge, because everyone said there is a killer on the bridge.

Finally the man who has the boat, he says, "Oh, are you going to pay me?" And she says, "I have no money; I left my money at home." So, no money, no boat. She comes back to see the lover, and the lover says, "No, I will not give you money to go back to see your husband. Either you're going to stay here or at home. You stay here, and wake up here and go back tomorrow morning."

And she says "No, I cannot do that. This is my husband." So she finally decides to take the risk of crossing the bridge. She takes the bridge, and she gets killed. Who's responsible for her death? Is she responsible? Is the lover, who couldn't understand that she had to go back to her place to see her husband, and who didn't want to give her money to take the boat? Is it the boatman? Was it the husband who was betrayed because he was so stupid that he didn't notice that his wife was betraying him? That's the psychological test to see who's guilty. That's what the script was about, and so it's set in a small model maquette. One of those small models, like architects make. And at the end, it's a model, like a model town. And at the end of the movie, you see that in fact someone is watching this model, like Barbie dolls inside the models, and someone is controlling the whole experience,


UN FILM DE GASPAR NOE
CARNE
【カンヌ国際映画祭国際批評家週間賞受賞】
カルネ……………………【R指定完全版】
わたしは娘を……食べたいくらいに、愛している。
ATTENTION！……注意／感受性を傷つける危険な部分があります。

and he takes a Barbie doll, which is dead like the woman. And so you say it's kind of like you see in Pasolini's shorts. Who is responsible? Or is there no responsibility, it just happened?

The film is done with live people, right?
Yeah, that's right.

And how is the model used in the film?
At the end. Because at the end, once she's dead, instead of giving a solution to the film, there's just this huge hand coming and picking up the body, and then the guy pulls the small model of the woman in his pocket, and he closes down the whole model. And there's like a film studio, so it's just that.

It's okay. But at the time, it was quite ambitious for the money I had, inside a film school like the one I was in and so on. But it's not a great movie.

Did people notice any of it? Did you show it very much outside of your family and

friends, or you just knew you wanted to keep going with that?
I went to a film festival with other film directors, and I said: Here I go. I didn't get any awards with that movie. Other people got awards. And I said, I can do better. I started competing, because with a short movie, you're not competing when you start doing movies. And you go, and you're competing with other people. But that's the good thing about competition, it makes you do the work. When I see it now, I say: Oh, phfffft. Should this really be done?

Was Carne after Pulp Amer?
Yeah.

How long did it take you to make Carne?
Two years. Between the morning I started preparing the movie, and the time it was finished, it was two years. Sometimes you start a movie, you just have the money to buy the film. And of course you're not paying anybody, but still you cannot pay the lab to develop the negatives. You're waiting to find an apartment that you could get for free to repaint it for the movie.

I scheduled the main location after, which was a house. So I did it in pieces. I found actors who were ready to shoot. Whenever they were ready, and the location was ready, we would go shoot. So it was two days here, one day there. Like David Lynch did with Eraserhead.

It took him four years.
And then when I did the other one, Seul Contre Tous, it was a nightmare, because I was really broke, because my girlfriend had directed a film at the time—Lucile Hadzihalilovic—which ate a lot of money that I had kept for four months. So actually we finished her movie first.

And when I started shooting Seul Contre Tous, I was broke. So it's weird, because Carne had been really recognized, and every single producer was pushing me to do a movie in the Tarantino style. Tarantino, well, he doesn't work with the style of Carne. I'd rather do something more Dostoevsky.

I said, No, I'd rather finish this other movie. And in fact no one really wanted to help. They were all saying: Yeah, I wish we could help you. At the end they were still saying: Yeah, Carne is great. But you should do one movie like this.

The phrase is every man must carry his own cross. I did Seul Contre Tous, just because I was really happy with Carne. I said, I want to go farther than these stories. But no one believed at the time that I would ever finish the movie. They said, this is just like destroying his own career. He'll never finish the movie, he's self-destructive.

And I did finish it. All these people who thought you were self-destructive, and you were the director of only one short, and you never—then you are happy, because then the movie has its own power. I would never have been able to do that particular movie inside the film industry.

And actually, once the movie's finished, it's released, it's broadcast on TV now. The movie exists. There are movies that cannot be sold on a figure. You can maybe find a rich guy who wants to experience producing one weird movie, but I haven't found him yet.

Oscar higher than he ever thought he'd be in *Enter the Void.*

After many years of meeting people, I haven't found one which will say: If you want, I can finance your next movie. People who are rich usually are rich because they know how to keep their money, not because they know how to spend it.

I know someone who worked for Doris Lockhart Saatchi for a while, and she knows how to keep her money.
It's weird, because if I was rich, the best thing I could do with it is just do something. And the only person who really helped me with Seul Contre Tous financially was agnès b. Besides the people who were buying shorts for Cannes, who were also proud of Carne. So they gave me money for this other one, but they gave me just money to do a short film, not a feature. So I was broke again.

I don't know many people who behave like agnès b. She's helping artists to do artistic things. It can be films, it can be shows, whatever.

But lately she's also helping some exhibitions with Harmony Korine. She's helping to finance Harmony Korine on the projects that he is doing. She's one of the rare people, persons nowadays who behave that way. In the eighteenth-century, there were no galleries.

Like a benefactor?
Benefactor, I would say, or even three centuries ago, there were no art collectors. There were benefactors who would give money to Mozart to play, or other people would just help.

Kubrick made his first feature when he got money from his uncle. Fear and Desire. Have you seen that?
No.

They showed it at Film Forum. They actually showed a print.
It was shown as a print? It was a secret projection, or—?

No, they advertised it in their calendar and showed it for a whole week. It was after that show that they shut it down everywhere.
From what I've read Kubrick really wasn't earning much money until he got pulled onto Spartacus. And then he chose to do Paths of Glory. After that he was able to start doing his own stuff. And when you think about 2001: A Space Odyssey, a studio made that.

That's incredible. I'm sure that he earned a lot of money at the end. It was an ambitious experimental movie. It's the most serious science-fiction movie ever made. I've seen it over and over on TV, whatever.

Paz de la Huerta feeling it, and [next page] Oscar sees his life before his eyes in *Enter the Void*.

How long did it take you to finish Seul Contre Tous?
About five years. But at the same time we were doing this other movie, La Bouche de Jean Pierre, that I was producing with Lucile. I was working a lot also on dailies of that one. I was not supposed to be there, but I did the work. I also did some mix, some editing.

Were either of you able to get money from the French government for either of your films?
Yeah, but shorts, you know, they give you subsidies for short films. Because that movie was supposed to be $57,000; at the end it was more than $100,000 to cut. But when you're not working because all your energy goes to the movie, then you become very reclusive, staying in your apartment all the time.

Yeah, how were you surviving during that time?
Actually, I don't know. As an author, when a movie you directed is shown on TV, you get like a music right. Like the musicians get music rights, for the use of their music on a radio station, you also get rights for being the author of a movie that was on TV. That was some money. Many different things.

I don't know how I've been here so long. New York's really expensive, and I've been here eleven years. It's crazy.
Sometimes if you consider how your friends survive, how do they really survive? And mostly sometimes you say: Well, I have to stop buying all this stuff. Buying books, buying CDs. And, you know, I'm going bankrupt, the taxes are running after me, whatever.

And you'd rather buy your DVDs or posters. A cheese sandwich every day, because you cannot help your addiction to art, to music, to cinema. It's much stronger than your addiction to food.

Something happens, though, when you start doing the creative thing. You make a choice. 'Am I going to spend time pursuing someone else's thing, or am I going to make my own thing?'
It all depends on what you consider fulfilling yourself. If you think fulfilling yourself is getting money, buying an apartment, buying a nice car, and fucking blonde models. Okay, maybe we go for an action movie, Hollywood if you can, whatever.

But in my case, I want to fulfill myself. Some other directors that I respect have fulfilled themselves before: Fassbinder, Kubrick. Maybe it's not going to be easy, but I could not take doing popular commercial work. I was offered to direct the remake of

The Fly and I said, They've already remade it, and they said, we want to remake it again. No way.

It's weird that I get accepted to do pop videos. Sometimes when I see Michel Gondry's works or videos by Chris Cunningham, I really like that. So you say, well, that's a good way of learning how to use the language of cinema.

It's interesting the way the film Seul Contre Tous starts, it just starts with this image of the outline of France, and this big F. "This is France."

Also, I like this image, too, because I'm not French. But people are always thinking that France won the Second World War. There were far more collaborators than Resistance at the time. So it's weird. And it's also a way of bringing it back. Now it's getting much better, but at that time people were voting for or against the European Community, and what does 'European' mean?

So people became very racist all around Europe at that particular time. And in France, they were saying they were first-class citizens, the French, then the Europeans, and then third-class citizens are the extra Europeans and the people who come from any other country outside the European Community.

There was like a sick feeling about being nationalistic there, that I couldn't share. Just watching the politicians talking on TV, even the ones who were supposed to be left wing, And I was thinking: What the fuck are these guys saying? And so it was a way of taking revenge on the whole system that I was living in.

That man, Philippe Nahon's character, everybody can relate to that.

I relate to him myself. It would be me in a state of crisis if I wasn't born in an artist family. I think I relate to him because I was born in a better home.

Lately it's been hard for some people to get work in New York. There's people that can't eat, and a fifth of America doesn't have health insurance. But the image that's projected all the time is Britney Spears and her cars and clothes.

I think really the poorness in America isn't really properly shown in most movies. You have the premises here, for example in Henry: Portait of a Serial Killer, you see that now they can only afford to buy one McDonald's meal a day or something.

Artist Stephane Blanquet, his girlfriend Olive, Eugenie, Gaspar and friend in Paris, 2004. Photo Shade Rupe.
Next page: Paz de la Huerta entertains in *Enter the Void*. Courtesy IFC Films /Wild Bunch

But there aren't many movies that are not documentaries that really show how poor people live.

Barfly?

I haven't seen that.

It's pretty funny, because Faye Dunaway and Mickey Rourke both look like shit. It's about these poor, drunk, alcoholic people. It's not glossed over, and they don't put on the pretty makeup and the pretty lights.

That's something that I think really, really works about Seul Contre Tous—people can relate to the butcher. And even though he's an older man, kids can relate to him. You ended up creating a character that, luckily, for investing so much time in a movie, that people can actually relate to. Even if they're horrified by his actions or what he's saying.

It was so funny at that New York festival screening. The reactions were so wild. People were really freaked out: "What the hell did we just see?" They were asking the weirdest questions, and you gave them such blasé answers. Very funny. It made sense that John Waters would pick it as one of his favorite movies of the year. I know he introduced at least one or two screenings of the film.

The guy who called me earlier, when my phone rang, he's a truck driver working for movies. He knew that I was Gaspar Noé and said, "Oh, I've seen some of your movies."

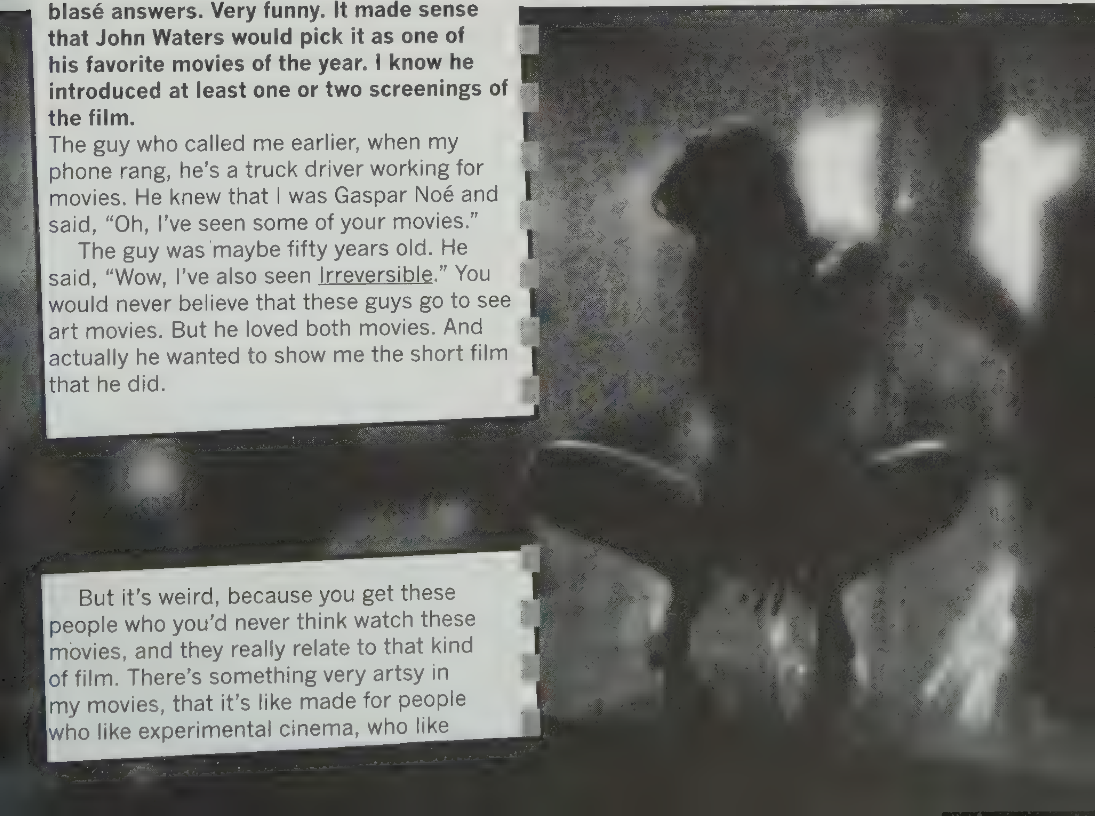
The guy was maybe fifty years old. He said, "Wow, I've also seen Irreversible." You would never believe that these guys go to see art movies. But he loved both movies. And actually he wanted to show me the short film that he did.

But it's weird, because you get these people who you'd never think watch these movies, and they really relate to that kind of film. There's something very artsy in my movies, that it's like made for people who like experimental cinema, who like conceptual art. But at the same time, I think the characters are very close to the ground, so most people cannot trust themselves with the characters, because it's not cold and distant. It's them or people they know.

Those images and things happening in Seul Contre Tous... you must have known they would be somewhat confrontational to an audience. The guy punching the woman in the stomach, getting rid of her baby, and just talking the way he talked.

And the closeup on the mouth: "Nigger, faggot." These are things that an audience isn't used to hearing. They feel personally offended seeing this sort of stuff. So you're already making a difficult film, and while you're making it, you're not getting that much support to make the film.

But then you have a lot of words. Both movies have been extremely well accepted. Even if people say, "Well, how do you react to the critical attacks?" I say, well, the attacks are fine, not only do I enjoy them, but they are great publicity for the movie.



When you get attacked, and people say: "You're irresponsible, you're a Nazi, you're the new Marquis de Sade," it's a lot of fun. Because you know you're not. And then they're making a lot of publicity for you. For example, the New York Post. I see, "This is the most disgusting film director ever." Of course you will go to see the movie.

I know that the distributors here were very happy with the release. And also, they were very happy with the video sales. They give you figures. I don't know if they're real, unreal. But I bet it means that they're doing some good business.

When did you start realizing, with Seul Contre Tous, that you had made a film that was being talked about, that it wasn't just going to be a movie that was released and then put away for a while?
Not for a while. I thought maybe the movie would be kind of banned in France. Actually, I've been lucky with all my movies. They've all been selected in the main competitions, because the last one was the unofficial selection of the Cannes film festival. But I was in the other selections, like the Critics' Week.

When you show the movie there, suddenly you're not only exposing yourself to a French audience and the French critics' community. You're exposing yourself to the whole world at the same time. Because in the other festivals, you have maybe thirty per cent of the French people, and the rest are Americans, Yugoslavians, Argentineans, Brazilians, Italians, wherever.

And suddenly, well, if some people don't like it, maybe some other people like it. I always had a very good response. It's weird, for example, when Carne was showing in Cannes, all the French, all the Italian press was raving about the movie. I don't know why they wrote about that movie.

I thought Seul Contre Tous, there was no reason they would attack me. But the critics were all saying, "No, this guy has lost his path. He's just replaying the same movie over and over." It's weird, because other people in France loved the movie, and in America it was much stronger. But it's weird how sometimes you have national reactions to a movie.

For example, I'm hated by the Spanish critics. I don't know why. Maybe because I'm Argentinean, and they're very racist with Latin American people. Whatever I do, they always insult the film and, even more, my own person for being an Argentinean Nazi skinhead. It's weird. They just want you to be dead, so they write it down.

In France, everybody knows I'm not born there, but they consider me as French. And you never, never see, "this Argentinean director." They just say, "this French director." Maybe because they want you to be part of their own culture, they just decide to adopt you. Maybe someone who dislikes Atom Egoyan would say, "this Armenian director." But when they like him, they would say, "this Canadian director." It's like a phenomenon. People who like Schwarzenegger, they won't say, "this Austrian," they say, "this American hero." If they dislike him, they say, "this Austrian Nazi," right?

I think your films are much more universal, even though you're speaking of certain conditions in a certain place. They're definitely not confined to France, the way that certain other films can be.

But when someone like Chuck Palahniuk, when he wrote Fight Club, he wrote that out of some kind of anger. Or like Peter Jackson. He couldn't get the money to do Braindead, so he did Meet the Feebles. And he did it with this anger. But you don't come across as a very angry person. I've never read that you were ever angry, despite that character being one of the angriest characters we've ever seen in the cinema.
The anger mainly was the physical. At that time, my friends were directing movies. Sometimes they were getting normal budgets or they were paid to do their movies. I wasn't paid. I was suffering, accumulating massive debt.

And I said: Why do these guys, who are not more talented than me? Some are, some aren't. But even if they were, it's just like, well, I'm suffering for making movies. I wasn't suffering from showing them; I was taking a lot of pleasure from showing my movies.

Japanese chirashi for *Irreversible.*

That's the anger, when you get your script refused. Then you start hating the woman who refused your script on this TV channel or whatever, and then you focus and you can even kill her in your own dreams. And then if you don't get this subsidy, you just have nightmares during which the guys say, "No, no, no," and you end up with a hammer in their faces, like in the movie. And it comes out in the movie.

But the good thing is that all this pressure that you put on your shoulders, when you still finance movies, it appears because then there is something more risky, at the end, that appears on the screen, because you're not trying to please the guy who gave you the money. No one gave you the money, so you're just trying to please yourself. And, in that case, just thinking how Buñuel did his Andalusian Dog, or thinking how it's mainly David Lynch who did Eraserhead, For me, it's his best movie, that was the one I could watch over and over.

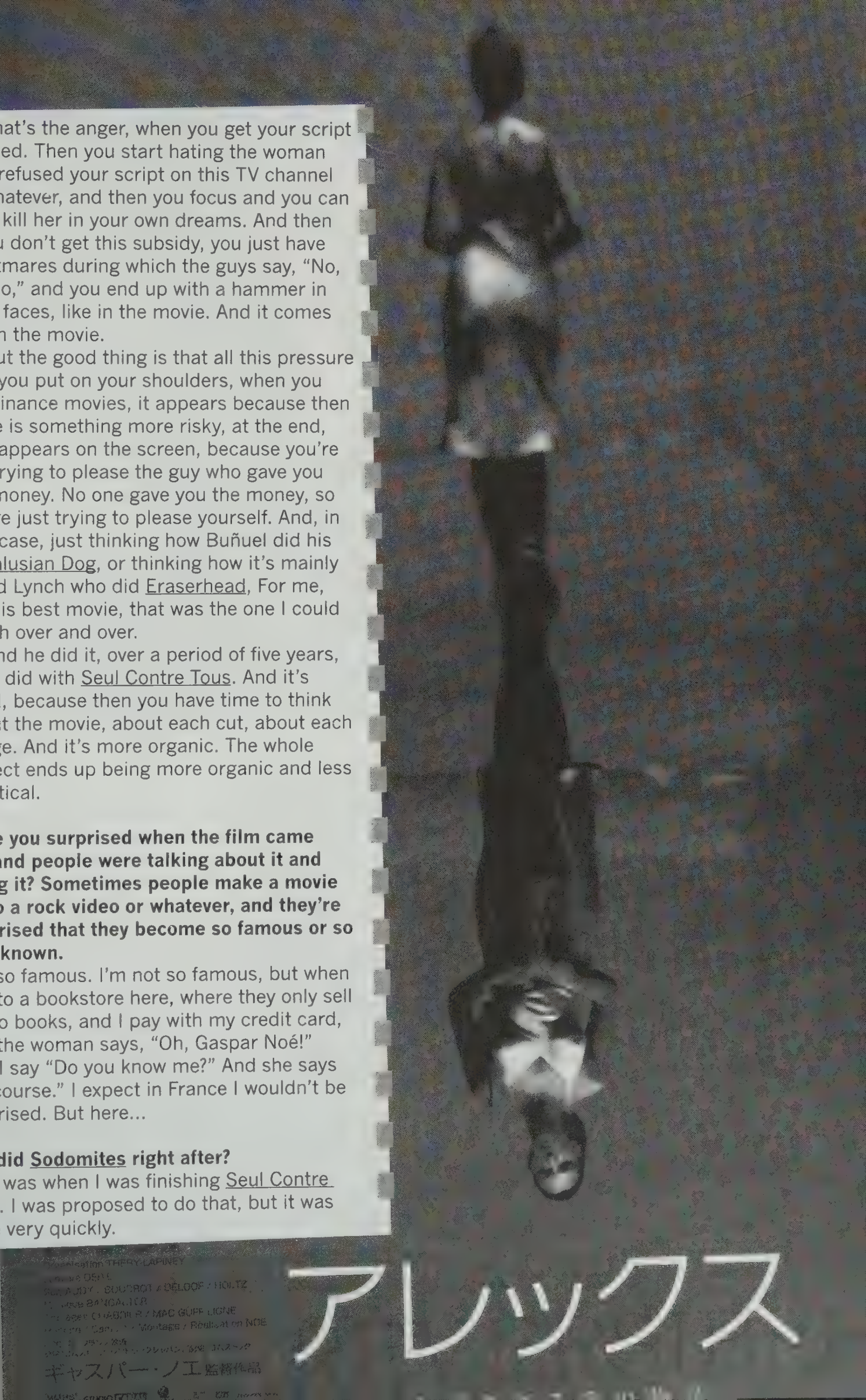
And he did it, over a period of five years, like I did with Seul Contre Tous. And it's good, because then you have time to think about the movie, about each cut, about each image. And it's more organic. The whole project ends up being more organic and less practical.

Were you surprised when the film came out and people were talking about it and liking it? Sometimes people make a movie or do a rock video or whatever, and they're surprised that they become so famous or so well known.

Not so famous. I'm not so famous, but when I go to a bookstore here, where they only sell photo books, and I pay with my credit card, and the woman says, "Oh, Gaspar Noé!" And I say "Do you know me?" And she says "Of course." I expect in France I wouldn't be surprised. But here...

You did Sodomites right after?

That was when I was finishing Seul Contre Tous. I was proposed to do that, but it was done very quickly.


アレックス
ギャスパー・ノエ監督作品
Montage / Réalisation NOE

Was that an AIDS prevention public service announcement?
Yeah, that was a public service announcement. The Ministry of Health contacted this company that finds directors for commercials. They said: We want to do a campaign against AIDS, to show straight people how they should put condoms on and things like that. So there were different subjects, and they wanted normal directors, not porn directors. Other directors in their fifties had this offered to them, and they said: No, no. And finally, I was the first one to say yes, and then they convinced these other people, Marc Caro who did Delicatessan. There were five directors in total, and there were five different subjects. I took the anal subject, because I thought that I needed the hardest one.

That looked like a pretty good budget for a one-room public service announcement.
We were shooting on 35mm. I was surprised, because we got film stock for free, because they said: We want to help you to fight against AIDS. And we got also the camera for free. But otherwise, the cost of the short was $40,000.

I just love that one fat guy in the chair. He's great.
I had a lot of fun. I think for the first time in my life I had fun on the set shooting. So then later when I did Irreversible, I had a lot more fun. It's better when you're not asking for favors from everybody that I used for Carne, and for Seul Contre Tous.

Who was the main girl who's getting fucked in Sodomites?
Claudine Trentin, who co-directed Baise-moi with Virgine Despuentes. She used to be a porn actress at that time. Now she stopped doing porn. She and Virgine were very close.

At the end of Sodomites, when the girl sticks her finger in to show the cum, what exactly is she showing by doing that? Because in a way don't you think you wouldn't want to touch it?

This page: Gaspar on the set of *Carne*. Next page: Gaspar at the U.S. premiere of *Enter the Void* at Sundance 2010. Photo Shade Rupe. And [far right] French art for *Enter the Void*. Courtesy Wild Bunch.

No, it's just that he came inside her, but he didn't pretend that he came. You see the semen was inside.

What is the hunting story all about, Le Lâcheur d'animaux d'élevage?
It's against hunting. I didn't like it. They proposed to me to direct it. I did it in one day.

You definitely did it in that similar Seul Contre Tous style—wham, wham, wham.
There was not much money. I got paid to do it against hunters. I'm not for hunting.

Have you ever eaten horsemeat yourself?
Yes.

Do you like horsemeat?
Yes.

Here they farm cows and pigs and grow them all in a big giant warehouse. And they have no life, they never get to hang out with their parents. They're just grown just to be killed. And then they're ground up.

But if you say to people, "In China, they eat dogs, there are farms for dogs, they raise them for their fur, they raise them to eat them." If you tell people, they're like "Omigod, I would never do that!" But they'll eat a pig or a chicken or a cow. Or drink milk.

I think we're the only species that drinks the milk of the mother of another species. It's so weird. And people don't think that's very strange at all. But if you say something like "horsemeat," they're like "Oh, how could you kill a horse? How could you eat a horse?"
Many doctors say that the worst thing for health is to drink milk.

Yeah, it's terrible.
Cheese and milk are not good for humans.

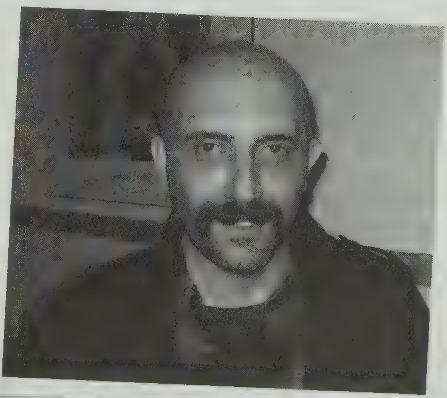
But the thing is that the dairy farmers want you to keep buying it. It's all cholesterol. You know the only places to find cholesterol are in animal products. That's it. You have to eat animal products to get cholesterol, so if your cholesterol's high, it's pretty easy to figure out.

Irreversible was such a great experience. I'm sitting there watching the movie opening night and when the credits started tilting I got goosebumps, and I knew that it was going to be a journey.

And by the end of the first entire Rectum scene, I started thinking, Wow, this reminds me of 2001. I was like, Wow, this movie is like a journey. It's like a trip.
It was done probably to have something like, I don't know if you've done mushrooms, but you have images and you cannot stop them, and you think you've seen something and it's already gone.

Have you ever read Cosmic Trigger, by Robert Anton Wilson?
I read Prometheus Rising. He's great. His interests are great.

Yeah, he relates everything to everything. In Cosmic Trigger, he looks at all the different religions, and he says in every one there's a woman, there's this figure, there's that figure. And he just shows how they all match, and how there are these archetypal images, these needs that we need to see. We need to elevate people to these levels. We need to see them in this way.
I would love to meet Robert Anton Wilson.



I bet that you could just write him a letter. He's in Los Angeles?

I would guess San Francisco. Because he was doing stuff with High Times magazine for a while, which became Mondo 2000.

How did Irreversible come about as your next project?
I had another project, another different project, and then I proposed to Philippe and Monica. They said yes, and then at the last morning, they turned it down. We already had a producer who was related and he read the script and he turned it down.

We were to have lunch with the producers, and the same morning I go to pick them up, they say, "No, we've finally been thinking about it. There's so many exterior shots, we cannot work it into the budget. We're not doing it."

Because I knew that would happen, I just said, "Well, why don't we just do a rape and revenge movie? We're really serious." And they said, "Yeah, yeah." "Yes, I am. Let's do the whole movie with improvised dialog."

I think I was enjoying more the idea of doing this other new movie idea then, than I was doing the one that we were supposed to do. I knew it would be much more complicated.

Did you know that you were going to have to have special effects in Irreversible? That the only way to make the film was to use modern special effects?
Have you seen the tape or DVD that came out called Executions? A kind of Faces of Death.

Oh yeah. I've seen a lot of those.
There's a guy who is living one minute, then all of a sudden half of his face is missing, and he's screaming. And at the first moment it almost made me vomit in front of the screen. Because you see death, how it is, it's painful and it takes a long time on the screen.

But of course they pretend to protest against executions and to be a pro-amnesty movie. "We don't know it, we're just showing it." And the image is so shocking, that whatever the commentary says, you don't even listen to it. But actually that image served as a reference for the head-bashing scene in Irreversible.

It's weird because when we start seeing the guy get beat up, Tenia's friend, there is a little bit of confusion, because later we start putting the movie together. And I remembered what the guy looked like. But he didn't look like—
Because we put another guy in on purpose. For fun.

Why did you choose to put yourself in the movie?
Because I wanted to be in the movie. Because I was doing the camera, I could not see myself in the movie. And then I thought it would be fun, and as you said earlier, it doesn't mean anything to be straight, gay, bisexual. People do whatever they're programmed to do with their lives.

I thought it was fun to be masturbating in front of everyone. It was the only place where I could put myself once the movie was already shot. Because we went back to the club when I saw an erect penis was missing, so we just shot one shot of an erect penis.

Somehow there was a guy who was taking out his eye. The image was really shocking, and we fit it actually in, because he had, how you say, a fake eye.

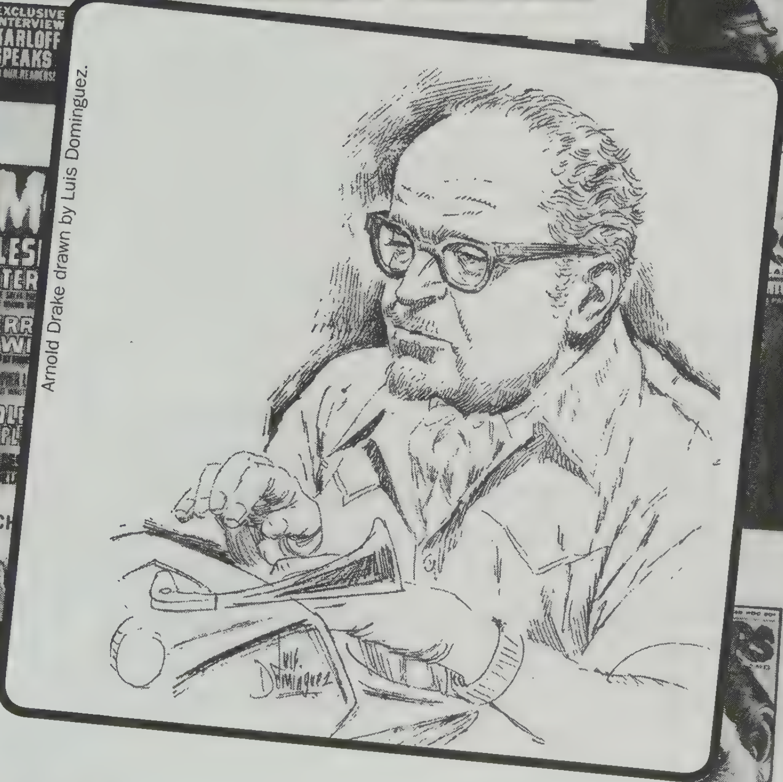
A glass eye.
A glass eye. But then it was too much like making a horror movie, with some very provocative imagery. If I was Jodorowsky I could have kept it. Actually we didn't use that, but we made many small takes to keep with movements that were not continuous, because it was not one shot necessarily, but of small moments that we linked together.

And I said, oh, I want to be masturbating there. I'm showing my dick. When I started masturbating, I wanted to have my penis erect but my assistant, my camera assistant and my assistant director were in front of the camera laughing.

"What are you thinking of? What are you thinking of?" And then I didn't really have a good hard-on. I'm still not happy with that.

ARNOLD DRAKE

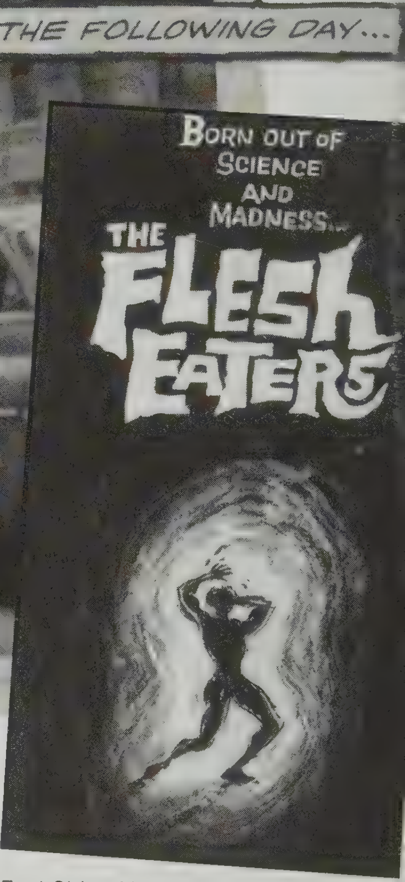
MONSTERS
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW KARLOFF SPEAKS
#20 CARRADINE
THE THIN MONSTER
FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND
#28 CHANEY
UNMASKED
FLESH EATERS
JERRY LEWIS
MOLE PEOPLE


Luis Dominguez

Arnold Drake drawn by Luis Dominguez.

WHEN... I was hired by MPI Home Video to publicize the first wave of releases from Dark Sky Films, one film in the bunch that really rose to the top was Jack Curtis' The Flesh Eaters, one of the first gore films and a really lovely and bizarre bit of adventurous independent filmmaking. Arnold Drake, the creator of DC Comics' Deadman and The Doom Patrol, penned and produced the tale.

I found Arnold living at 1st and 23rd and the conversations began. I'm so thankful to have spent time with Arnold. His comic book collection with many ten-cent price tags deserves a museum somewhere. For The Flesh Eaters, Who Killed Teddy Bear, and several great comic stories, thank you, Arnold Drake!


THE FOLLOWING DAY...
BORN OUT OF SCIENCE AND MADNESS...
THE FLESH EATERS

> *"We had no way of proving it, but we knew that he had."*

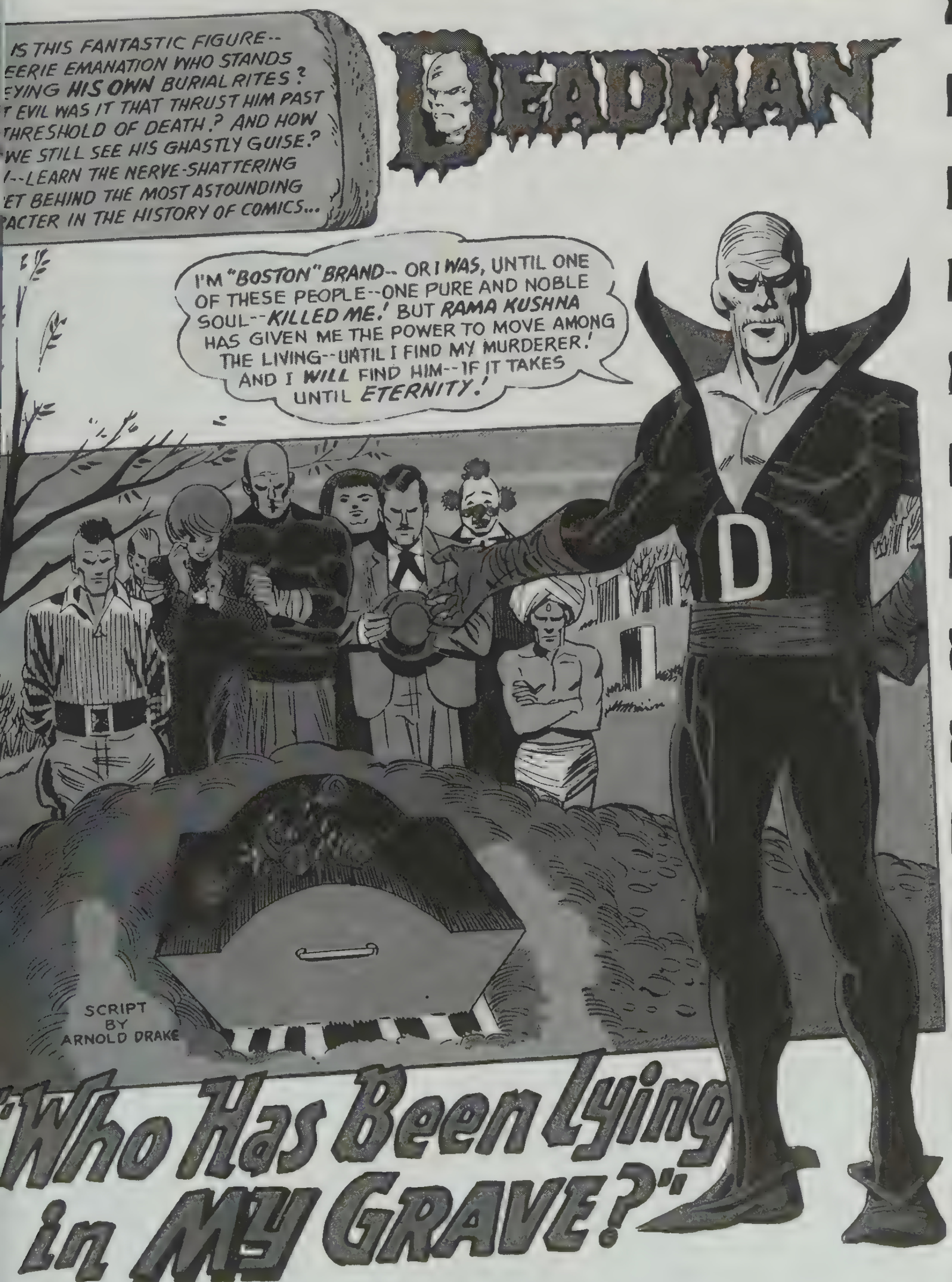
SHADE RUPE: Where are you from?
ARNOLD DRAKE: New York City. Right here in Manhattan. I may have been born in the Bronx. I'm not sure. But if I was, we moved here by the time I was a year old or something. I think I was born in the Bronx and then we moved to Riverside Drive and 157th Street. And then we moved down to Riverside Drive and 100th Street. And then we moved to 90th Street, and then we moved to Forest Hills. And that's the story of me up to my teens.

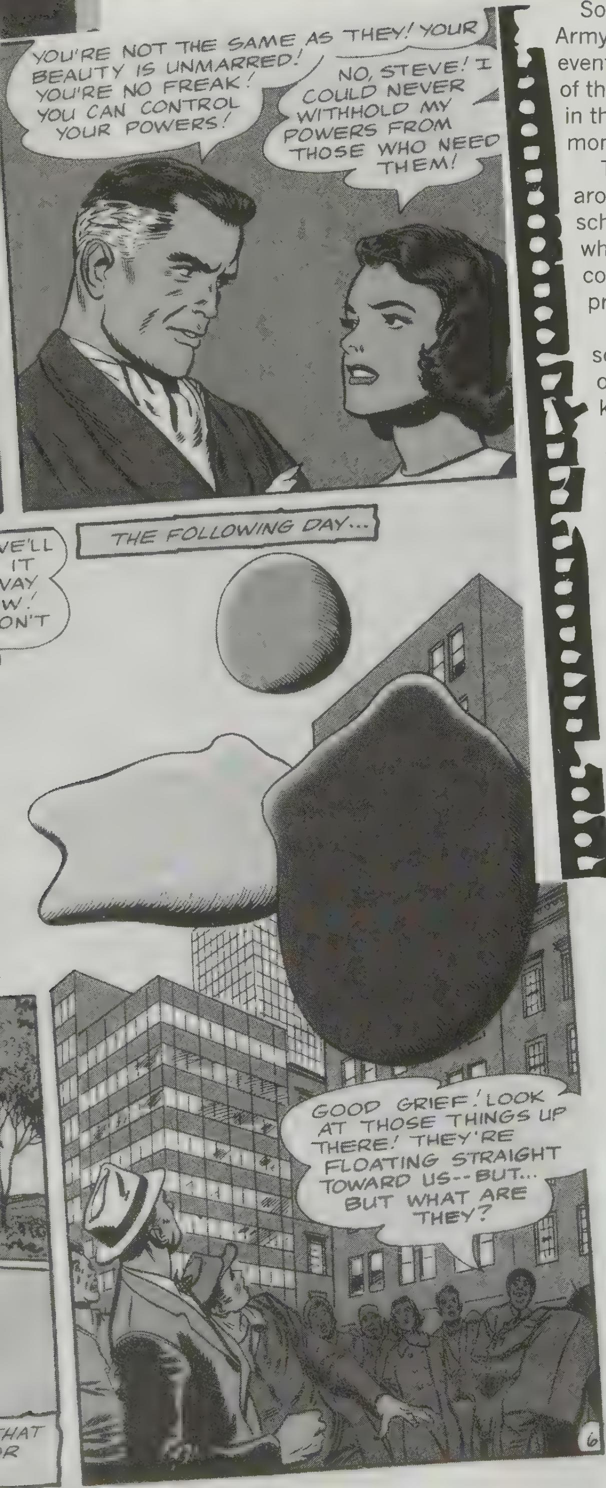
What were your parents doing here in town?
My dad had a business. He represented Southern furniture factories. He represented J.D. Bassett for a while, and a number of the other manufacturers. And my mother was busy bringing us up and running a private charity that she and her sister-in-law had started to help very poor Jews on the Lower East Side of New York.

And then we moved out to Forest Hills because the rents were lower there. My dad had lost almost everything in the 1929 Crash, along with a lot of other people. And so we moved on to Forest Hills, and then I joined the Army.

Along the way, Adolf Hitler took over in Germany, and killed lots of Jews and communists and socialists and Catholics. And it was pretty clear that we were going to have to fight him sooner or later.

This page: Jack Curtis and Arnold Drake in Manhattan. Next page: Splash page from *Strange Adventures* #27. Courtesy Arnold Drake.


IS THIS FANTASTIC FIGURE--
EERIE EMANATION WHO STANDS
EYING HIS OWN BURIAL RITES?
T EVIL WAS IT THAT THRUST HIM PAST
THRESHOLD OF DEATH? AND HOW
WE STILL SEE HIS GHASTLY GUISE?
/--LEARN THE NERVE-SHATTERING
ET BEHIND THE MOST ASTOUNDING
ACTER IN THE HISTORY OF COMICS...
DEADMAN
I'M "BOSTON" BRAND-- OR I WAS, UNTIL ONE OF THESE PEOPLE--ONE PURE AND NOBLE SOUL--KILLED ME! BUT RAMA KUSHNA HAS GIVEN ME THE POWER TO MOVE AMONG THE LIVING--UNTIL I FIND MY MURDERER! AND I WILL FIND HIM--IF IT TAKES UNTIL ETERNITY!
D
SCRIPT BY ARNOLD DRAKE
"Who Has Been Lying in MY GRAVE?"


YOU'RE NOT THE SAME AS THEY! YOUR BEAUTY IS UNMARRED! YOU'RE NO FREAK! YOU CAN CONTROL YOUR POWERS!
NO, STEVE! I COULD NEVER WITHHOLD MY POWERS FROM THOSE WHO NEED THEM!
THE FOLLOWING DAY...
GOOD GRIEF! LOOK AT THOSE THINGS UP THERE! THEY'RE FLOATING STRAIGHT TOWARD US--BUT... BUT WHAT ARE THEY?
6

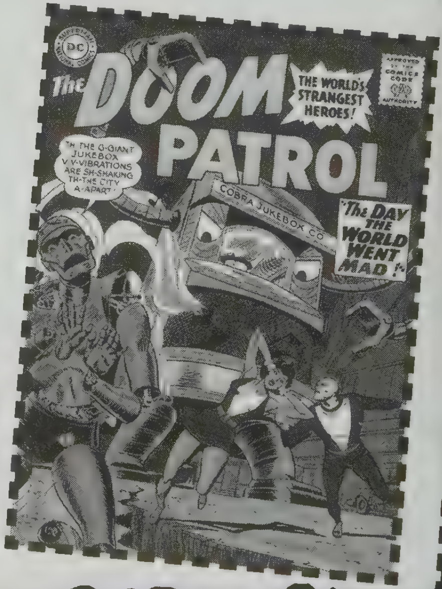
So immediately after Pearl Harbor, I joined the Army. I became a high-speed radio operator, and eventually landed in the 13th Armored Division of the Third Army under General Patton. I was in the Battle of the Bulge. Spent about three months in combat.

Then came back here and sort of bummed around for a couple of years. Went back to school, took a course in creative writing. And while I was doing it, the final exam for the course was not an exam at all. You had to produce a book.

So I wrote a book, a mystery novel. And I sold it. At which point I said: I don't think I ought to stay in college. I think I ought to just keep on writing. And that's how it began.

Wow, that's excellent you were able to sell your book that easily. Did you have an agent or did you go out and find someone to publish it and buy it?

I knew an editor, and I brought it to him, and he liked it immediately, and said, "We'll go for it." He bought a second book from me, but it was never published, because his publisher went out of the mystery business, and a number of volumes that they had bought were never published. Pity about that. It was a fun book about the beginnings of television in the United States.


DC
The DOOM PATROL
THE WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
TH-THE G-GIANT JUKEBOX V-V-VIBRATIONS ARE SH-SHAKING TH-THE CITY A-APART!
COBRA JUKEBOX CO.
"The DAY THE WORLD WENT MAD!"

Do you still have it in a drawer somewhere?
Yeah, I have a copy of the manuscript.

Might be something to revisit?
Yeah, I'll take a look at it. I'm getting together with my brother Ervin tomorrow, and we are revisiting a musical that we wrote about fifteen years ago. The producer was an Australian fellow, and he came here and made a deal with us to do a musical based on a science-fiction novel about reducing formulas which have become so popular. So it's about fatness, which is a plague in this country. And it's also about Wall Street, which is a plague of sorts as well.

So we've dug it out of the pile. The Australian fellow got involved with a woman out on the West Coast, and stayed too long in this country. When he got back, his partner had stolen the company from him. So he never produced our show.

So we dragged it out of the trunk recently, and decided it was still worth doing. So tomorrow we're going to get back to cleaning up the manuscript. He's written a couple of new songs for it. And then we'll see where we go.

We're going for an off-Broadway production. Probably a cast of eight or ten. I don't know what the cost would be these days. Everything's astronomical.

When you received your advance for your first book, did it seem to you you'd be able to support yourself through your writing alone?

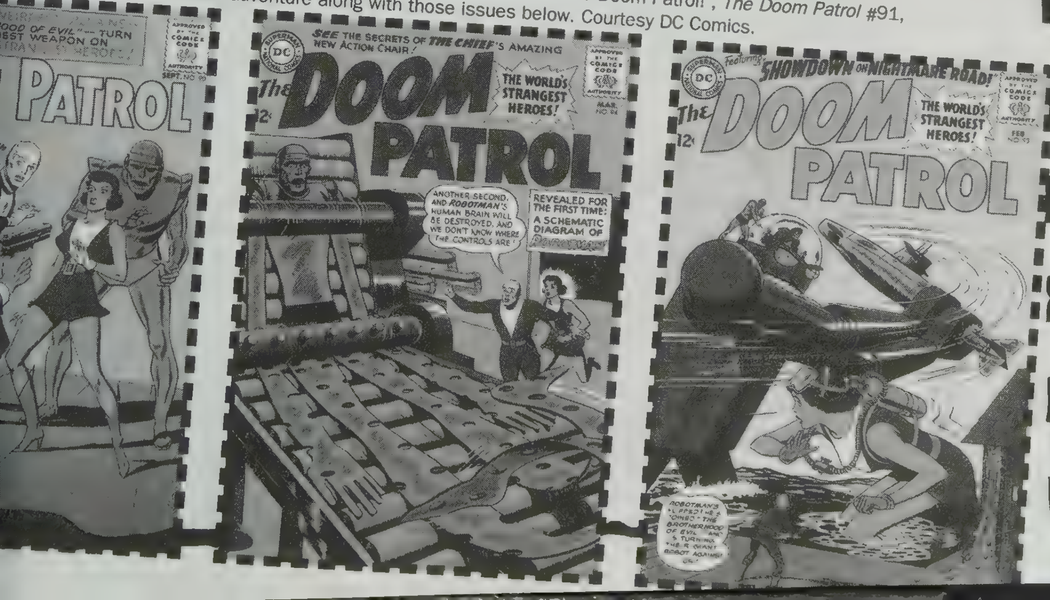
Yeah, I thought I could. I took the advance and Arlene and I went to Europe and stayed for about six months. I really wrote the book there, largely.

When I got back, I realized that turning out a couple of books a year—because that's what it would take to support us—might not be the easiest thing in the world.

At that point I was already writing pulp mysteries, but the pulps were collapsing. They were getting pinched. On one end there was this new thing called the softcover book, which gave people 300 pages of story for 25 cents. And the pulps just couldn't equal that. And on the other side they were being pinched by this new thing called comic books.

So the pulps collapsed, and I moved over into comics. Eventually I wound up at DC. I met Bob Kane, who was one of the creators of Batman. Bill Finger was the other, and Bill Finger was probably more responsible for Batman than Kane was, but Kane had a better publicity man, so everybody thinks he created it.

Anyway, Bob introduced me to the guys at DC, and I started writing Batman, and eventually I began to write stuff that I created myself. I created something called The Doom


OOD OF EVIL"— TURN
EST WEAPON ON
PATROL
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SEPT. NO. 99
SEE THE SECRETS OF THE CHIEF'S AMAZING NEW ACTION CHAIR!
SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS
The DOOM PATROL
12¢
THE WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MAR. NO. 94
ANOTHER SECOND, AND ROBOTMAN'S HUMAN BRAIN WILL BE DESTROYED, AND WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THE CONTROLS ARE!
REVEALED FOR THE FIRST TIME: A SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF ROBOTMAN
SUPERMAN DC NATIONAL COMICS
Featuring SHOWDOWN ON NIGHTMARE ROAD!
The DOOM PATROL
12¢
THE WORLD'S STRANGEST HEROES!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
FEB NO. 93
ROBOTMAN'S

Previous page: Blobs from space in 'Mento— the Man Who Split the Doom Patrol!', *The Doom Patrol* #91, an Arnold Drake-penned adventure along with those issues below. Courtesy DC Comics.

Patrol, a lot of very interesting characters, who are now going to be featured in an animation series by DC.

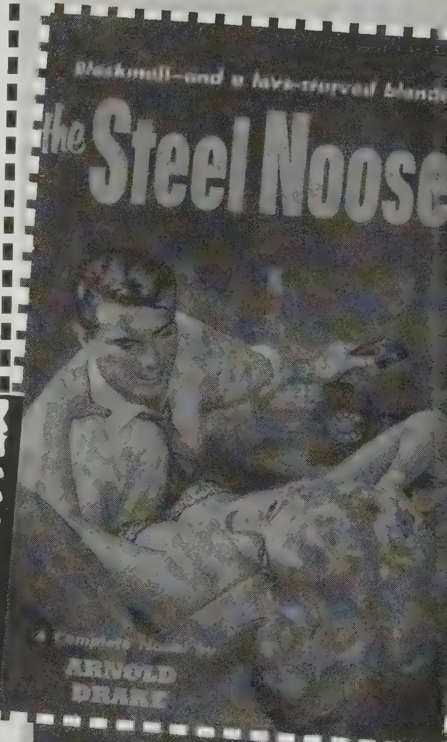
And I created something called Deadman, which was kind of a trailblazer in the field. It combined the adventure story, the superhero, with the mysticism of the East, and made for an interesting blend. And Deadman was fairly successful. Eventually I think that will wind up as a movie.

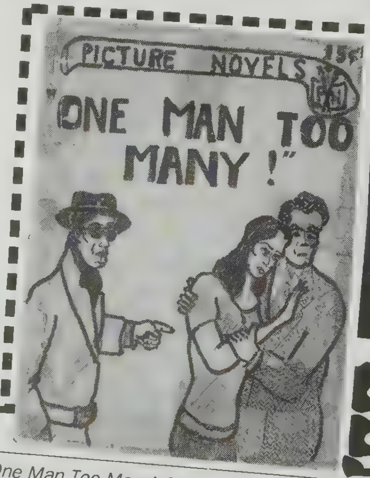
And along the way I wrote a lot of special material, humor and songs, for people like Xavier Cugat and Abbe Lane and Frankie Laine and Milton Berle and people like that. I wrote a duet for Xavier Cugat and Abbe Lane that they sang together, based on a couple of old Mexican melodies.

I also did a lot of PR work. I wrote for ATT and IBM. A lot of individual telephone companies around the country. I became a kind of an expert in PR for telephone companies.

And all the while I kept doing the comics. Then I got into doing the funny stuff, the Bob Hope books and the Jerry Lewis books, and eventually Little Lulu, which I did exclusively for ten years. I don't know how many comic book stories I've written, but my guess is somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000.

Are you credited on most of these stories?
In the last ten years I was, but during the first fifteen years or so, no. Nobody was.

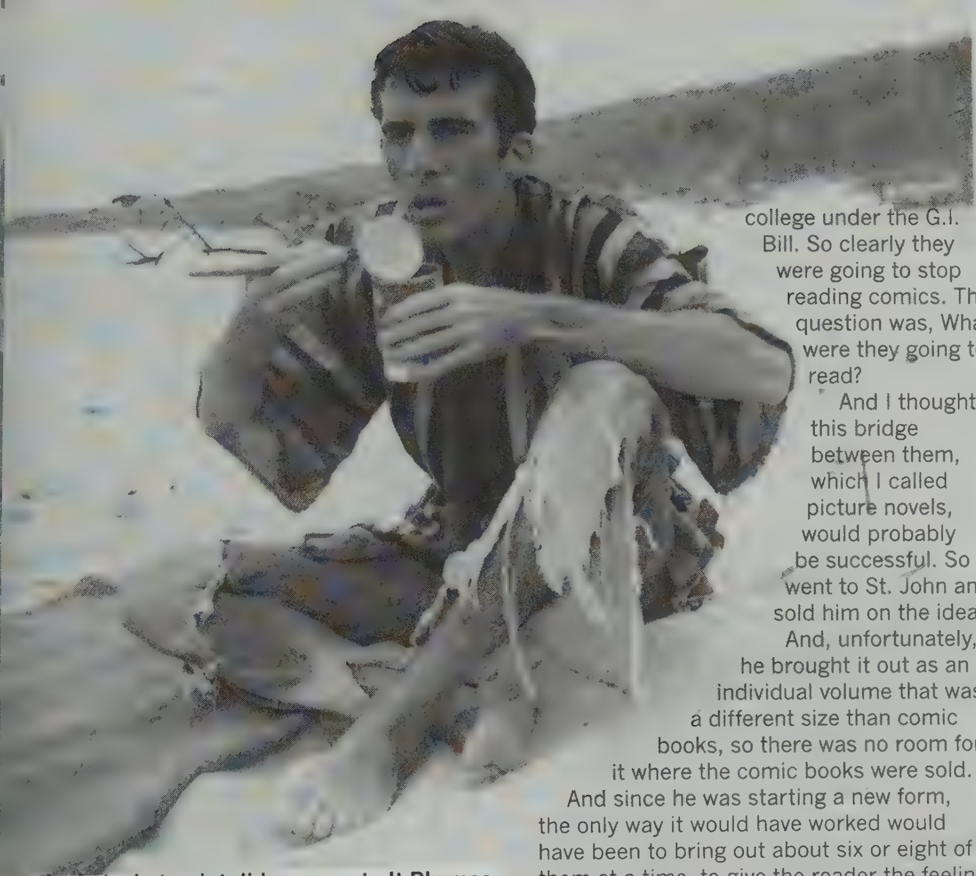

Blackmail—and a love-starved blonde
the Steel Noose
A Complete Novel by
ARNOLD
DRAKE


PICTURE NOVELS
15¢
"ONE MAN TOO MANY!"

PICTURE NOVELS
IT RHYMES WITH LUST
25¢
BALLOTS
AN ORIGINAL FULL-LENGTH NOVEL

This page: *One Man Too Many!*, Drake's initial mockup for his idea of a graphic novel, and [right] *It Rhymes with Lust*, the first graphic novel.

Next page: The production budget was so low Ray Tudor, as Omar, uses twigs to eat his canned food on the set of *The Flesh Eaters*. Courtesy Arnold Drake.



And at what point did you create It Rhymes with Lust?
Very early.

Even before you joined DC?
Yeah.

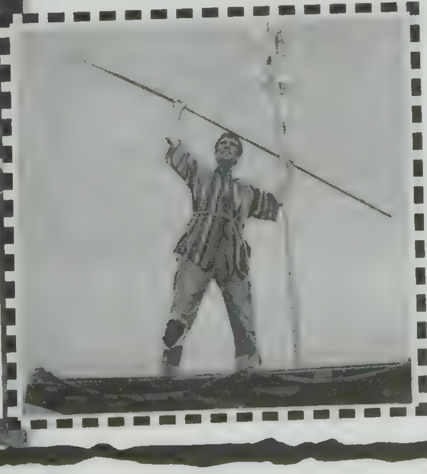
How did that come about?
I'd been writing some Western comics. I was looking around the field. I heard about a publisher named Archer St. John, who was a bit more liberal in his attitudes than most of the publishers.

He went so far as to give percentage interest in the stuff that the writer or the artist created for him. Which was unusual. Nobody was doing that at that time. But I heard he made a deal with Joe Kubert, one of the early artists, and that he had given Joe a piece of the action.

So I came up with an idea. The idea was to build a bridge between comic books and novels. Everybody in the Army was reading comic books when I was there. And then when the war ended, many of them went into college under the G.I. Bill. So clearly they were going to stop reading comics. The question was, What were they going to read?

And I thought this bridge between them, which I called picture novels, would probably be successful. So I went to St. John and sold him on the idea. And, unfortunately, he brought it out as an individual volume that was a different size than comic books, so there was no room for it where the comic books were sold. And since he was starting a new form, the only way it would have worked would have been to bring out about six or eight of them at a time, to give the reader the feeling that this was real and lasting, and to make it possible for him to read one after another, not read one and then wait two months for another one to show up.

So it failed. The form then got lost for about twenty-five years, and then it became known as graphic novels. And Will Eisner



got into it, and others, and it became an accepted form.

So you hadn't seen other people working in that media after your development?
No, there was nobody doing it for about twenty-five years. It just stopped, and they just continued to do comics as such.

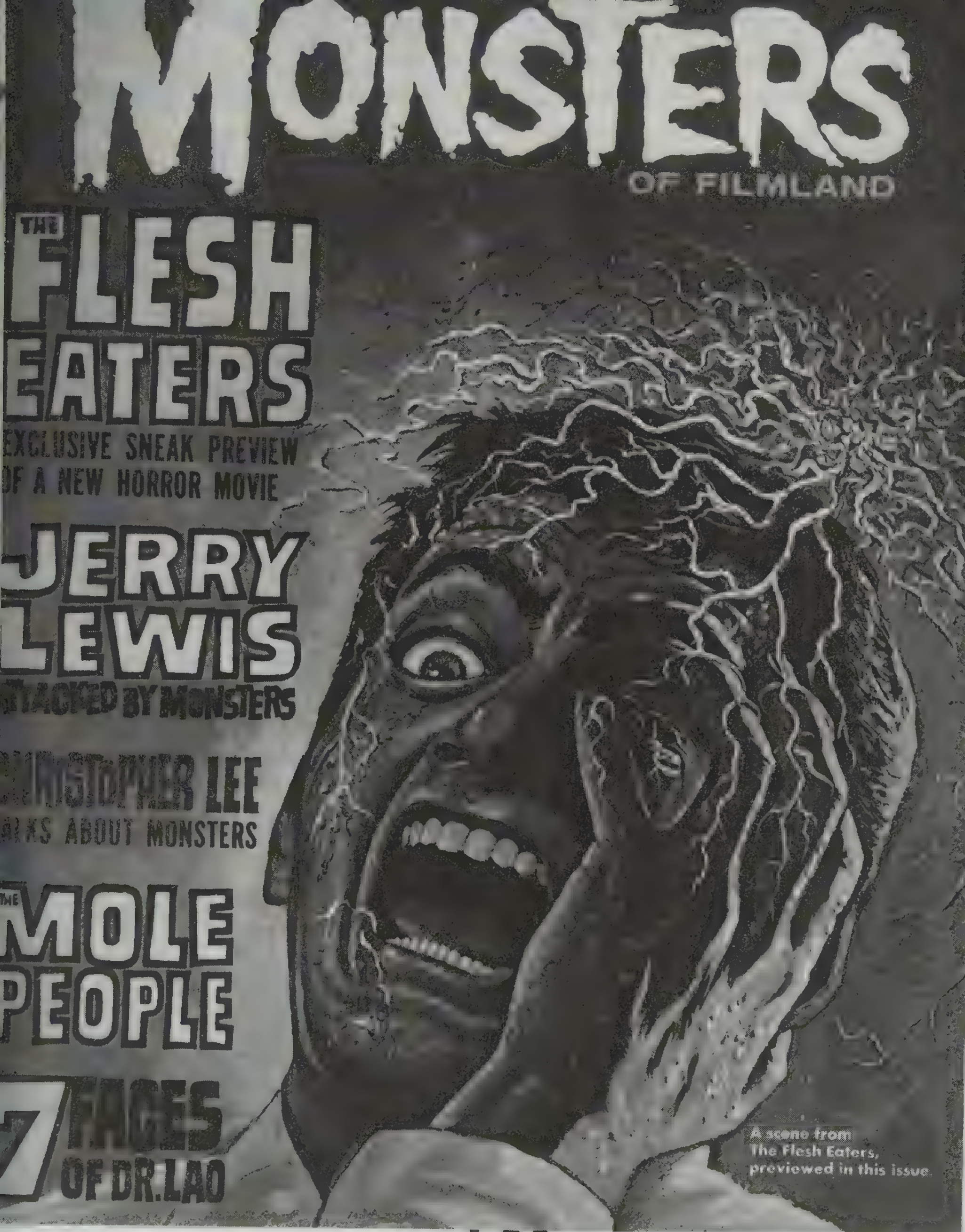
Wasn't there another form of entertainment you were involved with during the war?
Yeah, I ran something called the Veterans Bedside Network. That was showbusiness people working with guys in VA hospitals. We didn't just sing to them and act for them. We turned them into singers and actors, which I think is much more useful.

I was a volunteer, initially, for about ten years, in VA hospitals. And then I became the national director of the organization. We had eight or nine chapters around the country—New York, California, Kansas, Texas, Illinois.

I ran that for seven years. And then I began to realize that the hospitals were now primarily filled with drug and alcohol abusers, and that we needed a special program for them.

I couldn't sell it to my board of directors, so I left the Veterans Bedside Network, and organized something called the Veterans Real Theater, or the Real Veterans Theater, something like that, in which I used guys

Ray Tudor under attack in *The Flesh Eaters* and [next page] the film immortalized on the cover of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* 29.


MONSTERS
OF FILMLAND
THE FLESH EATERS
EXCLUSIVE SNEAK PREVIEW
F A NEW HORROR MOVIE
JERRY LEWIS
TACKED BY MONSTERS
HRISTOPHER LEE
LKS ABOUT MONSTERS
THE MOLE PEOPLE
7 FACES OF DR.LAO

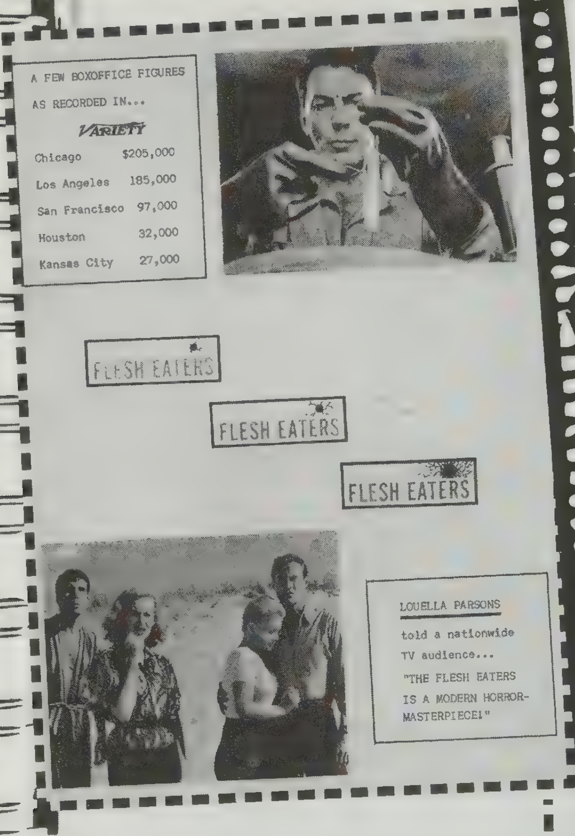
A scene from The Flesh Eaters, previewed in this issue.

who were drug and alcohol abusers as the actors.

And I wrote a script based on their unfortunate experiences. I wrote the whole thing in rhythm and rhyme. This was about the time that hip-hop was beginning to take off, and we did it in the school system for a while.

But then the guys in the cast began dying one by one from AIDS, of course, and I couldn't take too much of it. Under the advice of my doctor, I quit.

I did shows in the Army, too. After the European combat ended, we were sitting on our asses waiting to get



A FEW BOXOFFICE FIGURES
AS RECORDED IN...
VARIETY

Chicago	$205,000
Los Angeles	185,000
San Francisco	97,000
Houston	32,000
Kansas City	27,000

FLESH EATERS

FLESH EATERS

FLESH EATERS

LOUELLA PARSONS
told a nationwide
TV audience...
"THE FLESH EATERS
IS A MODERN HORROR-
MASTERPIECE!"

A page from *The Flesh Eaters* pressbook. Courtesy Arnold Drake.

shipped to Japan, and I put together a show called The New World Review.

Originally I did it just for our company, 240 guys. But it was successful, so the battalion asked us to do it, and then the division asked for us to do it. We wound up doing it in an open field at night in front of about 15,000 guys. We used the headlights on the jeeps to light the production.

And that was it. Came back here, got ready to go to Japan, and then they dropped the bomb, so I didn't have to go.

Slipping all the way over to comic books again...
Yeah.

You had written a novel, and then you got into comic books through DC. You also created a graphic novel.
Yeah. I wrote Who Killed Teddy Bear? along the way.

In between comic books, or after starting writing comic books?
No, I was writing them at the same time.

Was that your first screenplay that was produced?
No, The Flesh Eaters was. And the second one was something called 50,000 B.C., a dreadful movie. And the third one was Who Killed Teddy Bear? And then one that was never produced, thank god, called 30 Claws. It was going to be produced by the same guy who made 50,000 B.C., and he was just such a terrible producer that I was happy when he decided not to do it.

Why did you choose to make The Flesh Eaters on your own rather than trying to sell it, and have a whole other production company make the film?
It was hard to do in New York at that time. There was no real movie center in New York City. Keep in mind that television was just getting off the ground. Eventually television would form a base from which film studios and sound studios would spring up all over the city.

But at that time there was none of that. And if you wanted to do a film, you either went to Hollywood and sold them out there, or you raised some money and you did it here. So I raised some money and we did it here.

That's amazing. So you produced the film, and you raised the money yourself. Did you know how to raise money?
No, a lot of it was family money. Cousins and uncles and aunts and so on. And a lot of it was friends and friends of friends and so on.

How did you arrive at a budget for the film?
I was working very closely with Jack Curtis, and Jack knew a lot of the technical aspects, because Jack was first an actor, but then he became a very good technician, a good sound editor and a good film editor, and so

he knew about costs. And we sat together night after night and worked on the costs.

We thought we could bring it in for about $65,000 or $70,000. And we might have, except we made this dumb mistake. We decided to do the film on the tip of Long Island in the month of September. Which means we were inviting a hurricane, and we got it. It destroyed our set, and we had to just get out of there and come back a year later.

We were lucky that no member of the cast died or moved away, so we were able to bring them all back and complete the shooting. But the result was that it almost doubled the budget. We wound up with a budget of, I think, $170,000, something like that.

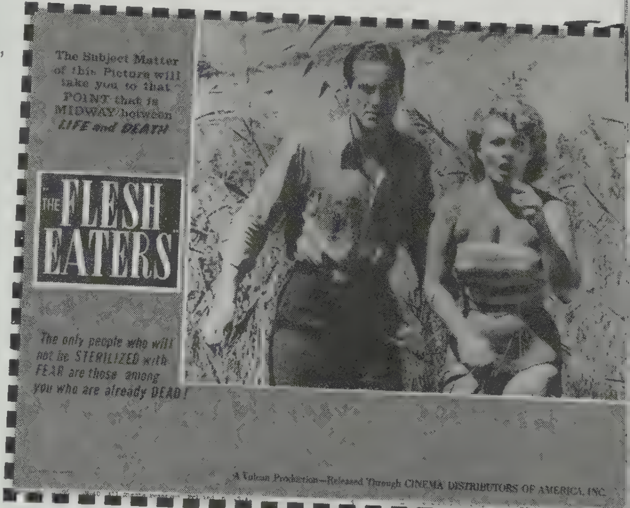
I just spoke with someone today who was able to make his movie in two weeks. A year-and-a-half has some dedication to it.
Well, when you say "in two weeks," you mean he shot it in two weeks.

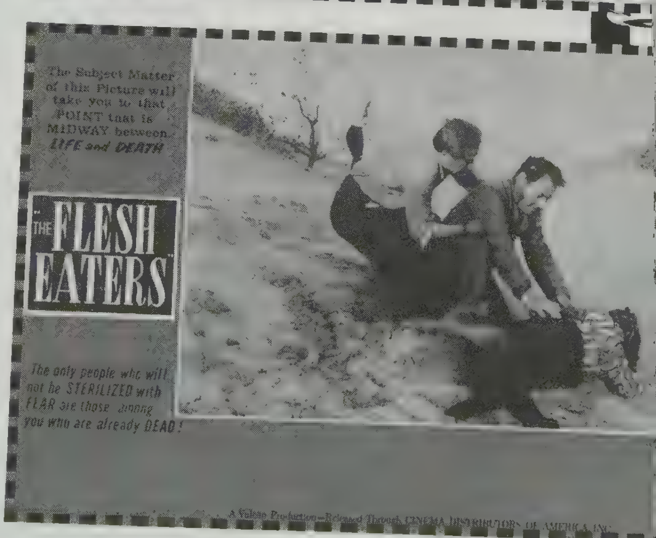
Right. He did pre-production for about a week.
He didn't put it together in two weeks. There was a lot of time in the editing room, you can be sure. And that's where most of our time went, into the editing of it. And also we didn't do it full time. We were both working at other things, so it divided our attention.

Now, when you wrote The Flesh Eaters, and planned on making the film, you'd already been doing comic books for a while. Was The Flesh Eaters mainly written and produced as popular entertainment? Or were you also thinking, I can make an exploitation picture that could be popular?
We set out to make a good science-fiction film. We set out to make a high-class B-movie. And I think we succeeded. I think that's what we did.

My training in comics was very helpful. I storyboarded the entire film. Initially we had like 200 scenes. We were able to get it down to about 110 or something like that. I sometimes drew full sketches, sometimes just stick figures. But I drew every scene in the picture. The storyboards faced the script. The storyboards on the left, manuscript on the right. I still have a copy of this.

Also, we were very early in the use of the Polaroid camera for keeping track of actors' positions and stuff like that there. In Hollywood, up to that time, they had a cue girl or a cue guy whose job was to make a note of what position the actor was in, whether he had a cigarette in his hand or not, at the end of each scene.


The Subject Matter of this Picture will take you to that POINT that is MIDWAY between LIFE and DEATH
THE FLESH EATERS
The only people who will not be STERILIZED with FEAR are those among you who are already DEAD!
A Vulcan Production—Released Through CINEMA DISTRIBUTORS OF AMERICA, INC.


The Subject Matter of this Picture will take you to that POINT that is MIDWAY between LIFE and DEATH
THE FLESH EATERS
The only people who will not be STERILIZED with FEAR are those among you who are already DEAD!
A Vulcan Production—Released Through CINEMA DISTRIBUTORS OF AMERICA, INC.

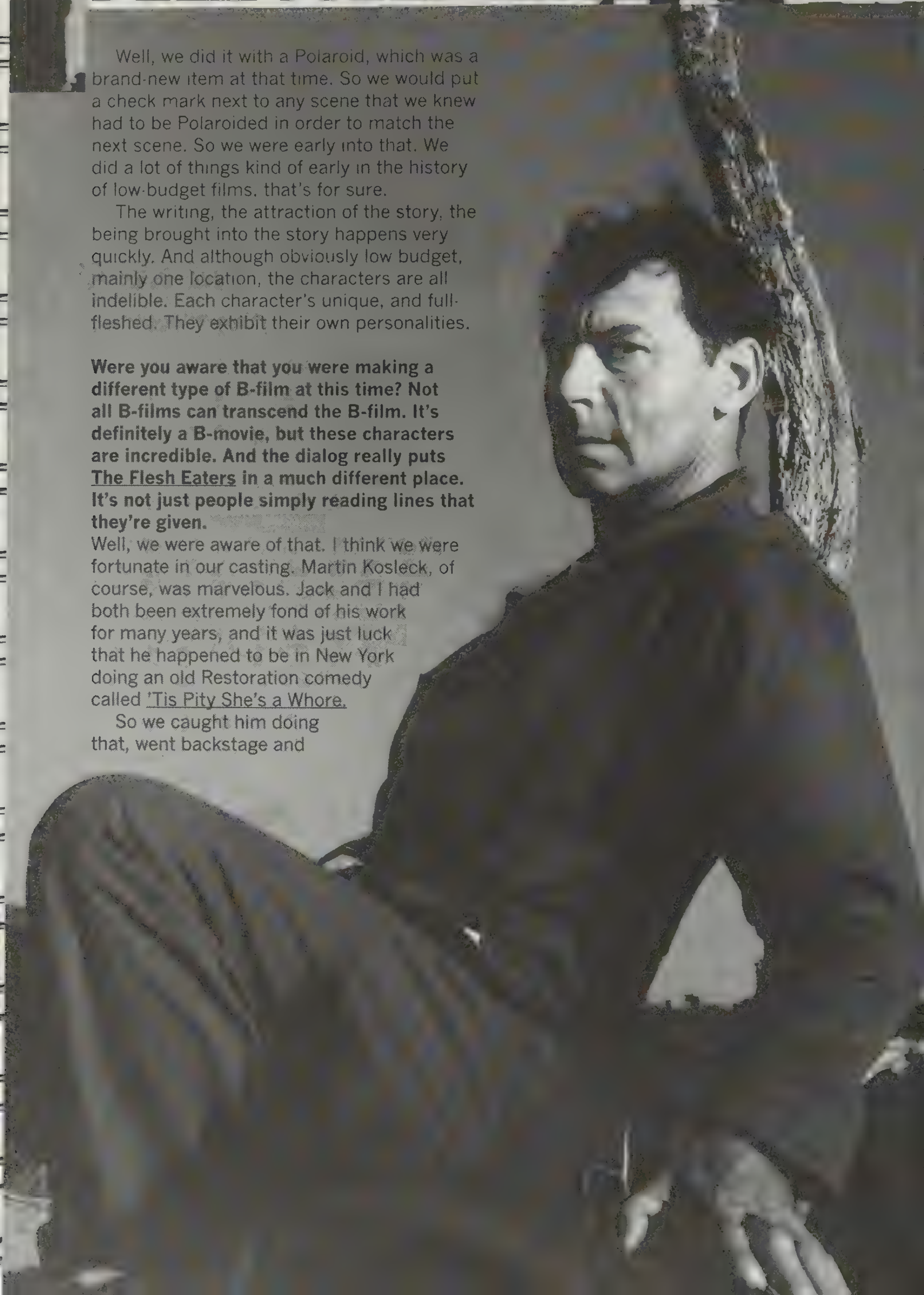
Well, we did it with a Polaroid, which was a brand-new item at that time. So we would put a check mark next to any scene that we knew had to be Polaroided in order to match the next scene. So we were early into that. We did a lot of things kind of early in the history of low-budget films, that's for sure.

The writing, the attraction of the story, the being brought into the story happens very quickly. And although obviously low budget, mainly one location, the characters are all indelible. Each character's unique, and full-fleshed. They exhibit their own personalities.

Were you aware that you were making a different type of B-film at this time? Not all B-films can transcend the B-film. It's definitely a B-movie, but these characters are incredible. And the dialog really puts The Flesh Eaters in a much different place. It's not just people simply reading lines that they're given.

Well, we were aware of that. I think we were fortunate in our casting. Martin Kosleck, of course, was marvelous. Jack and I had both been extremely fond of his work for many years, and it was just luck that he happened to be in New York doing an old Restoration comedy called 'Tis Pity She's a Whore.

So we caught him doing that, went backstage and



talked to him, and he was delighted at the idea. He hadn't done a good old-fashioned villainous role in quite a number of years, and he loved those villainous roles.

We found Ray Tudor, the guy who plays the beatnik, also in an off-Broadway production. He had never done anything before. I think that production may have been his first. But he had a quality that we liked, and it worked well. He did a good job with the beatnik.

SH EATERS
SH EATERS
SH EATERS

Barbara [Wilkin] was as good as Barbara needed to be. She had to be very pretty, and she had to be able to read a line with some sincerity, and she got away with it.

Rita [Morley] was an actress. Rita didn't have to be told. Well, what you had to do with Rita was to get her to be a little less of an actress. She had been doing a lot of stage work, and the screen requires much less presence. The camera takes care of your presence. So we had to work to get her down a bit.

But it was a good group that worked well together. Martin was an alcoholic, but Martin never drank during work hours. It was an ethical matter with him. But the moment that you said "cut" for the day, he was into the bottle and he remained drunk until the next day. And then he was up bright and early and ready to work.

I believe there's no relation at all between you and the other Drake involved in the film?
Nope, no relation. Christopher was Martin's boyfriend. We almost used Chris as the hero, but when we wanted to get him to read for us, he got plastered beforehand, and so the reading was dreadful.

But we knew that he had a problem; otherwise he wouldn't have needed to get drunk in order to do it. So we decided not to use him except for that small role that he plays. Nice guy, and a useful guy, but the pressure of having a lead role was too much for him. He was better looking than the guy we actually used.

The Flesh Eaters is often cited as one of the first gore films. I'm not aware of that many films before The Flesh Eaters that would linger on a gory scene in a film.
We knew it was happening. We knew it had begun, and we wanted to be a part of that. That's why we chose the distributor that we did, because he was into that kind of distribution.

That was Cinema Distributors of America?
Yeah, but he was schizophrenic. He was really nuts. And the result was he fucked it up. And he also, of course, stole a lot of money from us. We had no way of proving it, but we knew that he had.

So he was collecting the money and not passing it on?
Right, exactly.

Do you know how many cities the film opened in?
No, I don't know exactly how many. I know we opened in Chicago and quite a lot of the South, and Los Angeles and, I believe, San Francisco. I think the widest distribution was maybe forty or fifty theaters at one time.

revious page: Martin Kosleck in profile. Courtesy Arnold Drake.

So there were once forty or fifty prints available of the film.
Oh, there were once closer to 100, I think.

The voltage construct in the film, that big giant cube with the polka dots on it, how long did that take to build? Or was that just four simple walls? It's really wild seeing that in the middle of the film.
That's all it was, four walls put together with a bunch of disks pasted onto it. And it turned out, years later, that giant cellular batteries looked very much like that. But that was my own conception. Over in Israel, where they use a lot of cellular stuff, they've got batteries that look very much like that.

There's an element of sadism in the film that I don't recognize that much from films before the 60s. When the doctor feeds the beatnik the beverage of doom and he records the man's screams, very coldly he does this recording. That's fairly disconcerting, and also very noticeable in the film.
Yeah, well, we were looking for that. Interestingly enough, when we did our test screenings, the thing that bothered the audience more than anything else was seeing a needle entering a human body.

All of the gory stuff that we put on the screen didn't affect them as much as that, because they knew that was real. Today we're used to it. We've seen people being shot up in many films, but not at that time.

Speaking of needles, there are those sequences, the Nazi experimentation sequences. At what point were those shot and inserted into the film?
After the film was completed, the distributor decided that he could get another horror effect into it by doing that, and by running Kosleck's narration about what the Nazis were doing with this over the stuff that he shot down South, wherever it was.

It's pretty ugly but, you know, if he had used beautiful girls, their nakedness would have provoked people. By using fat, rather ugly ladies, it didn't bother anybody. It looked real.

Do you know how many prints that footage was inserted into? Would you have any idea?
No.

Was the film actually sent out in the version that you would prefer, and then some prints possibly had that additional footage?
I'm not sure at what point he did it. I'm really not certain. He may have done it right from the start, but I'm not certain.

What role did Radley Metzger play in the film?
Radley was a friend. Jack knew him better than I did. They had worked together. And Radley had a business of editing film, and

we needed to be covered by a member of the Film Editors Society, so we asked Radley if he would cover it for us. But Jack did the editing, and I did the editing. Radley did not.

Now, although many credit it as Radley's work, he did nothing. There was a guy named Carson Davidson. He's credited as being the cameraman, I believe. Carson came out and shot one reel for us, and it was bad. He was not used to shooting black and white. He'd been shooting in color for years, and we were doing it in black and white.

And we got rid of it. One of the reasons we did was that he kept getting sun flares. And, in those days, Hollywood never released a film that had sun flares. But today you see it all the time.

Yeah, it's like an effect. It's a technique that some people enjoy.
Yeah, nobody cares anymore. If that had been true then, Carson Davidson might have wound up actually shooting the picture. But at that time you couldn't take that risk, that gamble. He was called Kit, as in Kit Carson.

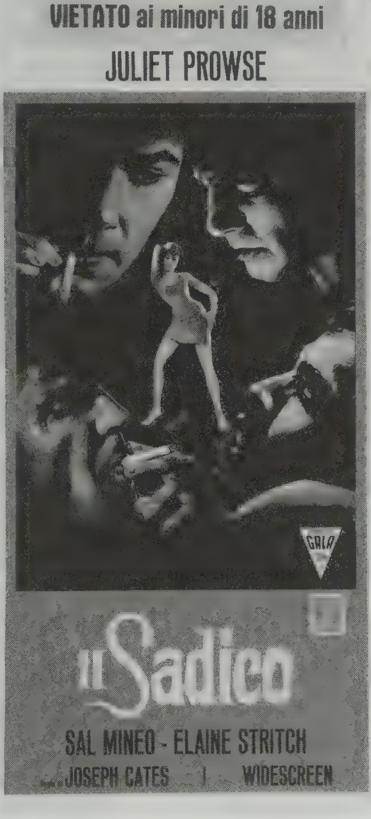
Kit did a lot of film work. In fact, he got an Academy Award nomination for a documentary called 3rd Avenue El.

So who ended up shooting the film?
Jack.

Did he also operate the camera?
Yeah, most of the time. I did some of the time, but he did it most of the time.

The camerawork is very, very noticeable in The Flesh Eaters. It's gorgeous.
Well, again, I had storyboarded everything, and so he knew what every angle was before he shot it. We worked on a very low ratio, maybe 2.5 to one, three to one at the most. And the reason we worked that lower ratio was that everything was storyboarded.

That monster is also pretty incredible. How large was the actual monster?
We had two of them. One was about four feet high, I guess, and probably three or four feet across. The other was quite small. It was the small one that eventually became the giant monster. The big one, we were able to shoot it as it was without having to use any special effects. But with the small one, we had to use special effects.


VIETATO ai minori di 18 anni
JULIET PROWSE
GALA
Il Sadico
SAL MINEO - ELAINE STRITCH
JOSEPH CATES | WIDESCREEN

And I made the small one out of cut-up pieces of the New York Times and a lot of glue, mounted it on a beach ball, and then I painted it. And I had to use every color except blue, because we were using a blue drop-out process.

So when it came out, it was all pink and yellow and red. And Pamela, my daughter, who was then about five years old, said "That's a birthday monster." Because it looked like a birthday cake. So that became known as the Birthday Monster.

Did you have a big premiere for the film here in New York?
No, we had a sneak preview, and I'm not sure that it ever played in the city. It played all around the city—Jersey, I think Staten Island, Connecticut, and so on. A lot of

Arnold Drake and Guillermo del Toro at the Mercer Hotel, New York, November 30, 2006. Photo Shade Rupe.
This page: Italian insert for *Who Killed Teddy Bear?*

theaters. It was very big in the drive-ins. It was a drive-in movie.

Did you drive out of the city and go take a look at the film at one of the drive-ins?
Mm-hm. Went over to New Jersey and saw it at a drive-in there.

Were you able to gauge the response of the audience at all?
Yeah, it was pretty good.

I bet. How did Who Killed Teddy Bear? get made? Had you sold that already or did you wait until after The Flesh Eaters was a released film?
Well, after The Flesh Eaters was released, I came up with the notion for Teddy Bear, and I wrote a rather lengthy outline, maybe a thirty-page outline. And I approached Joe Cates, who was then a TV producer and director.

He did a lot of those circus shows that you may remember from the 50s and 60s. Went around the world shooting the circuses of the world.

And he produced the musical What Makes Sammy Run? For which my brother Ervin wrote the score. And through Ervin I met Joe, and I approached Joe and showed him The Flesh Eaters.

And he was impressed with it and he said, "Why don't we make like four films together? Very low-budget, and we'll sell all the rights except to TV, and in ten years we'll be wealthy men."

So I thought that was a dandy idea. We got together at lunch, Jack and myself and Joe and Gil Cates, and Joe said, "I've decided I want to direct it myself, and I'd like to produce it myself." And so he bought us out. He bought me out, because it was my script. I in turn passed some money on to Jack, because he had been my partner at the time.

So Joe bought my script, and we agreed that it was going to be a very low budget film. My job was to get as many sexual references and innuendoes and blatancies into the damn thing as I possibly could, because that's what was going to sell the film. It would have no star. It was going to sell based on shock value alone.

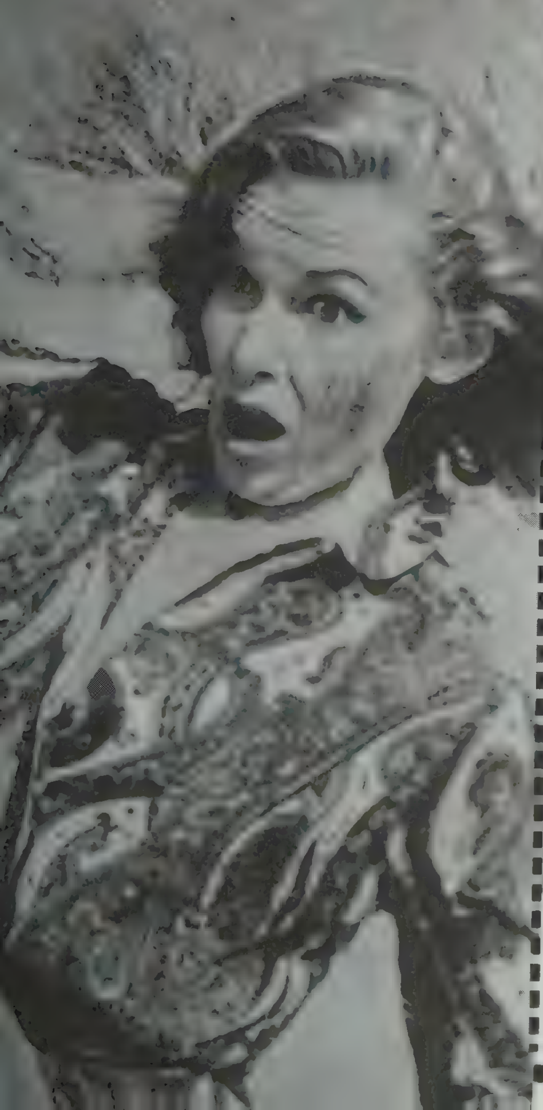
And it turned out, after I wrote that script based on that description, Joe decided he

Main image: Rita Morley tries knife against gun in *The Flesh Eaters*.
Next page: Barbara Wilkin gets close to the

was going to get himself a star. That's when he got Sal Mineo.

At that point, the script would not work. It had to be rewritten much tonier and revolve around Sal Mineo. But Joe did not bother to call me and say: "Do a rewrite." Instead he brought in a Hollywood writer, Leon Tokatyan.

Tokatyan had done quite a number of TV scripts at that point. Tokatyan rewrote much of my work. But I knew nothing about it until they actually began to shoot it, and that's when I realized what he had done and why he had done it.



How much of the finished film would you say is your writing?

About half. The storyline is all mine. And there are a number of scenes that are all mine as well. But there's a lot of other stuff in there, including stuff that Jan Murray added. He wanted to get his own jokes in, so he shoved them into the script.

Jan and Joe Cates had gone to acting and directing schools on the G.I. Bill together. That's how they came to know each other. And that's why Joe hired him. Actually, it turned out that Jan wasn't too bad. He was able to pull it off. But he wouldn't have been my first choice.

Who would have been your first choice?

That's a good question. There was a young guy that I played poker with one night, who was just beginning to get acting jobs. His name was Jerry Orbach. He would have been my first choice.

Have you had any other close calls with screenplays getting produced?

I had one that was really a shame that it was not produced. It was called Nobody Gets Born in St. Petersburg. It's St. Petersburg, Florida, not Russia. And it's about an area in St. Petersburg that I had read about when I was a kid, where New York policemen retire.

They wanted to live next to each other, and they wanted to live in the South. So this area of three or four blocks in St. Petersburg was full of retired cops, New York cops.

So I wrote a story about a bunch of New York retired cops who would like one last shot. And then I wrote in a bunch of old gangsters, old Mafiosi. The idea was to get every guy who'd ever played a cop or a crook into the film.

I wanted to get Pat O'Brien and Jimmy Cagney, if he was still alive at the time, and all those guys. I think it would have made a fantastic film. It was a comedy, of course.

And a lot of the stuff that I had in there has since been done. There's a whole sequence where one of them gets killed, and they have to carry his body around and pretend to be drunk, and he keeps falling down, they have to keep him from slipping off the bar stool. It's funny. And it almost happened, but not quite.

I think you've done pretty well getting three of them happening, actually. Who distributed Teddy Bear?

It was a company that was owned and operated by Spyros Skouras. Spyros Skouras ran a major studio, and in his desk drawer he had this little company. And every now and then he would throw a film from—what was it, Paramount that he was running, or Fox? One or the other.

He'd take a film from them and throw it into this little company of his. And he got a hold of Teddy Bear. He probably put up the money. I don't know for sure, but probably. So it was Skouras who distributed it, but I can't remember the name of the film company.

What projects do you currently have going on? I know you're meeting with your brother tomorrow.

Yeah, I'll be working on that. And I have this graphic novel based on The Doom Patrol. It's a prequel of The Doom Patrol. I've had a contract from them sitting on my desk for about six or eight weeks now, and I haven't signed it, because they're asking me to sign all my rights over to them.

I wouldn't sign that.

No. So I've got a lawyer working on it, and we'll see what comes of it.

You've also mentioned some interest in a sequel to The Flesh Eaters.

I have an interest in doing it, and if this distribution of the DVD works, they will know if it works because they will have comparative sales figures. And if they know that it's selling better than most of the stuff that they have previously distributed, then they will know there is an audience out there specifically for The Flesh Eaters.

At which point I would ask them to consider producing The Flesh Eaters II. If they're interested, then I would sit down and come up with an outline—a brief, you know, five-, six-, seven-page outline of what I would like to do with it.

If they don't want to involve themselves in that kind of risk, putting up their own money, etc., then I would suggest that they guarantee distribution. And if they can guarantee distribution, raising the money will not be difficult.

Doing something like The Flesh Eaters II today, would you want to have CGI effects, or keep the effects in a similar vein to the way they were created forty years ago?

I would like the film to look a lot like the original. So I would not want to get too involved with the kind of special effects they're using today.

When we shot so cheaply it was because at the most we had a combination of cast and crew that involved ten or twelve people, at the most. The cast was five, the crew was at times five or six. Most of the time, it was Jack and myself and one other person.

But you can't do that anymore. You can't get away with that. We've got trade union acceptance right down the line. You couldn't do that today, producing it at that price with so few people. So you'd wind up probably with a crew of about fifteen today.

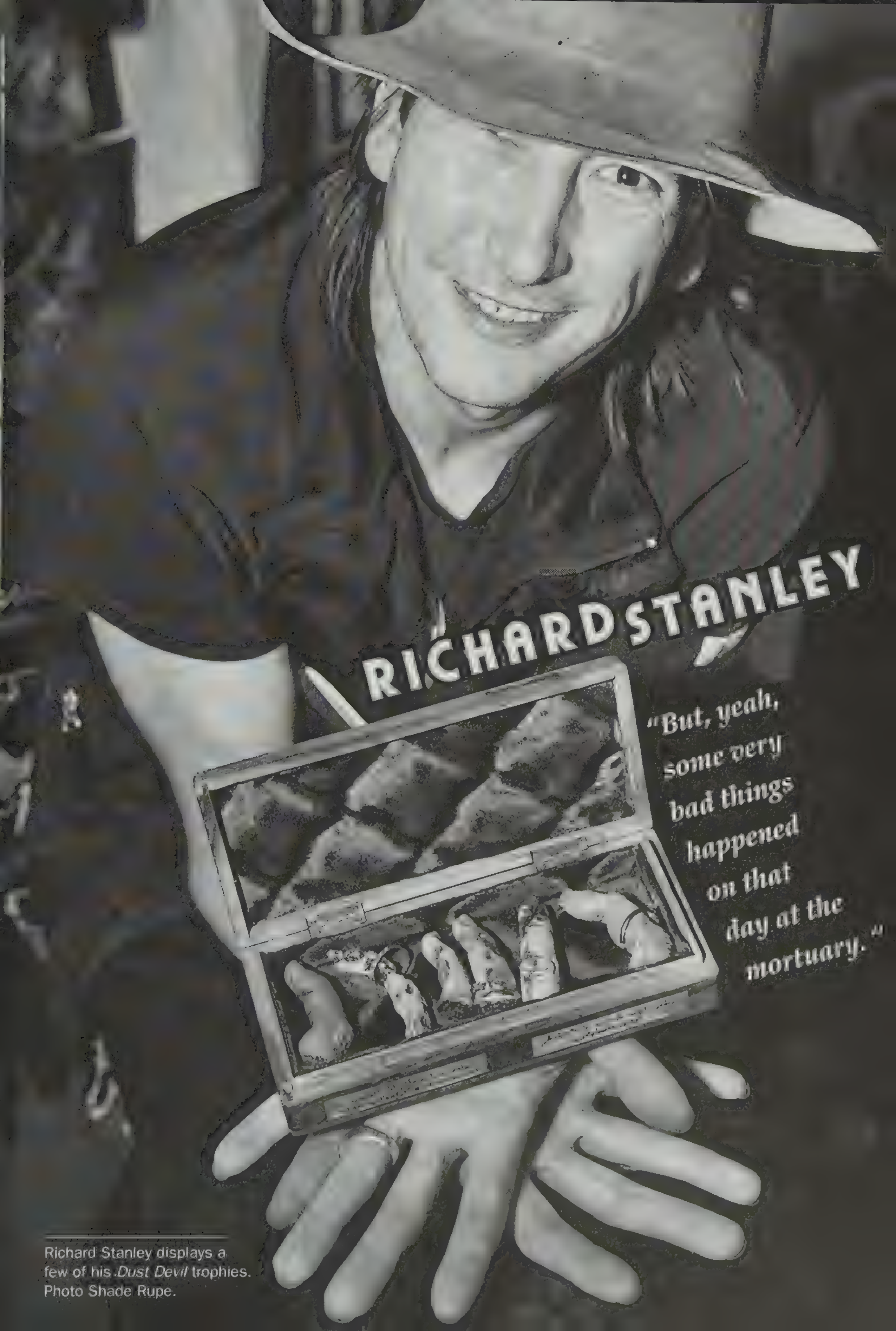
Would any of the original characters be returning?

No, but people who are linked to them would be.

Thank you, Arnold Drake.

You are welcome, Shade Rupe. ◆

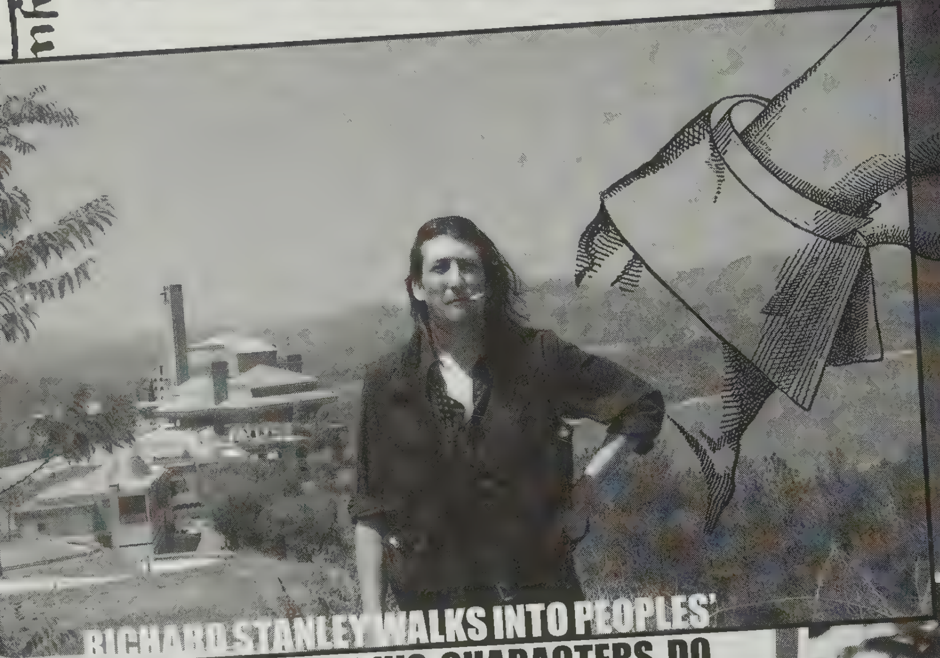
RICHARD STANLEY



"But, yeah, some very bad things happened on that day at the mortuary."

Richard Stanley displays a few of his *Dust Devil* trophies. Photo Shade Rupe.

DARK STARS RISING



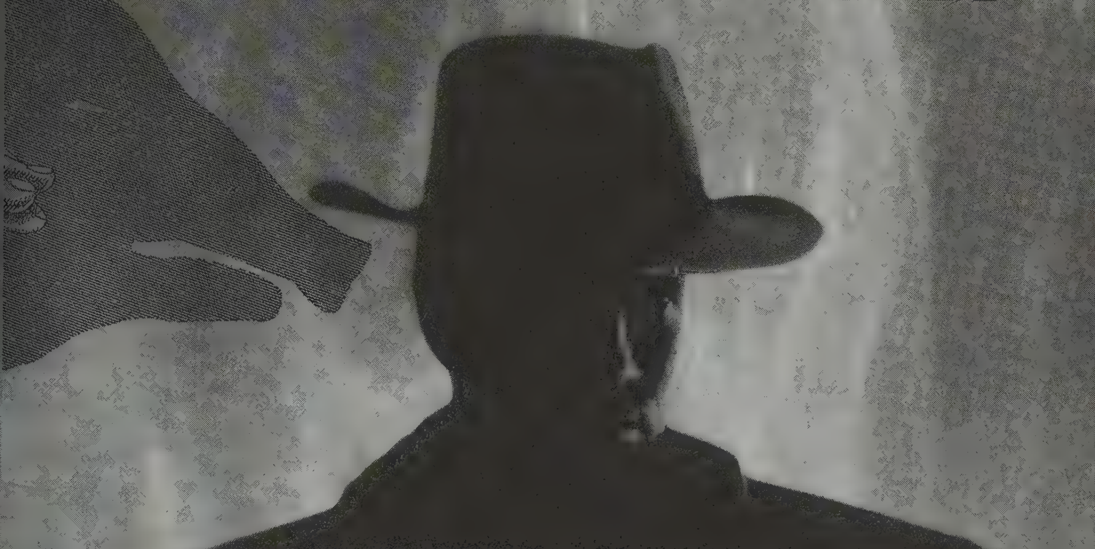
RICHARD STANLEY WALKS INTO PEOPLES' LIVES MUCH LIKE HIS CHARACTERS DO.

On the night I saw his own personal print of *Dust Devil*, his talk afterwards was a staccato delivery of cinematic doom and mayhem, problems and mystical events, danger, and lust. Richard Stanley is one of the more poetic genre filmmakers we have.

Assisting in acquiring the film for domestic distribution, I was able to spend time with Richard in New York and London, including a wonderful personal Jack the Ripper tour with Richard's good friend Andre Price, a most notable Ripperologist. Stepping into Richard's house on Portobello Road was like entering Mick Jagger's home in *Performance* (which was just a few blocks away in Powis Square), though geared towards horror films rather than the counterculture. Props from Richard's films, storyboards on the walls, costumes, and more dotted the frame of the eye. The dark, tall, walking man talks…

PALACE und FILM FOUR INTERNA
in Zusammenarbeit mit MIRAMA
SCREEN eine PALACE Produktio

RICHARD STANLEY



Previous page: Richard Stanley, somewhere; William Hootkins' grisly death in *Hardwar*
Background: Detail from the *Dust Devil* German film poste

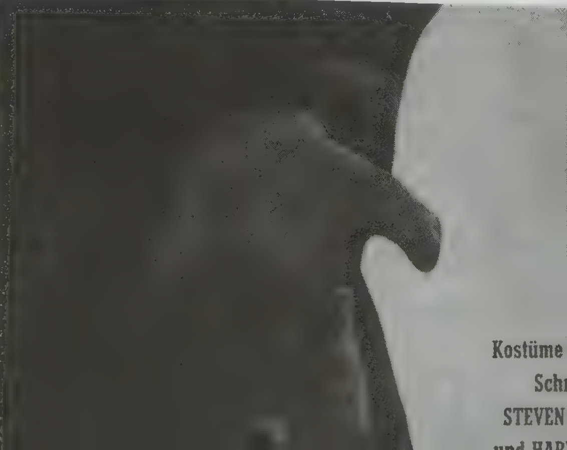
SHADE RUPE: Where are you from, Richard?

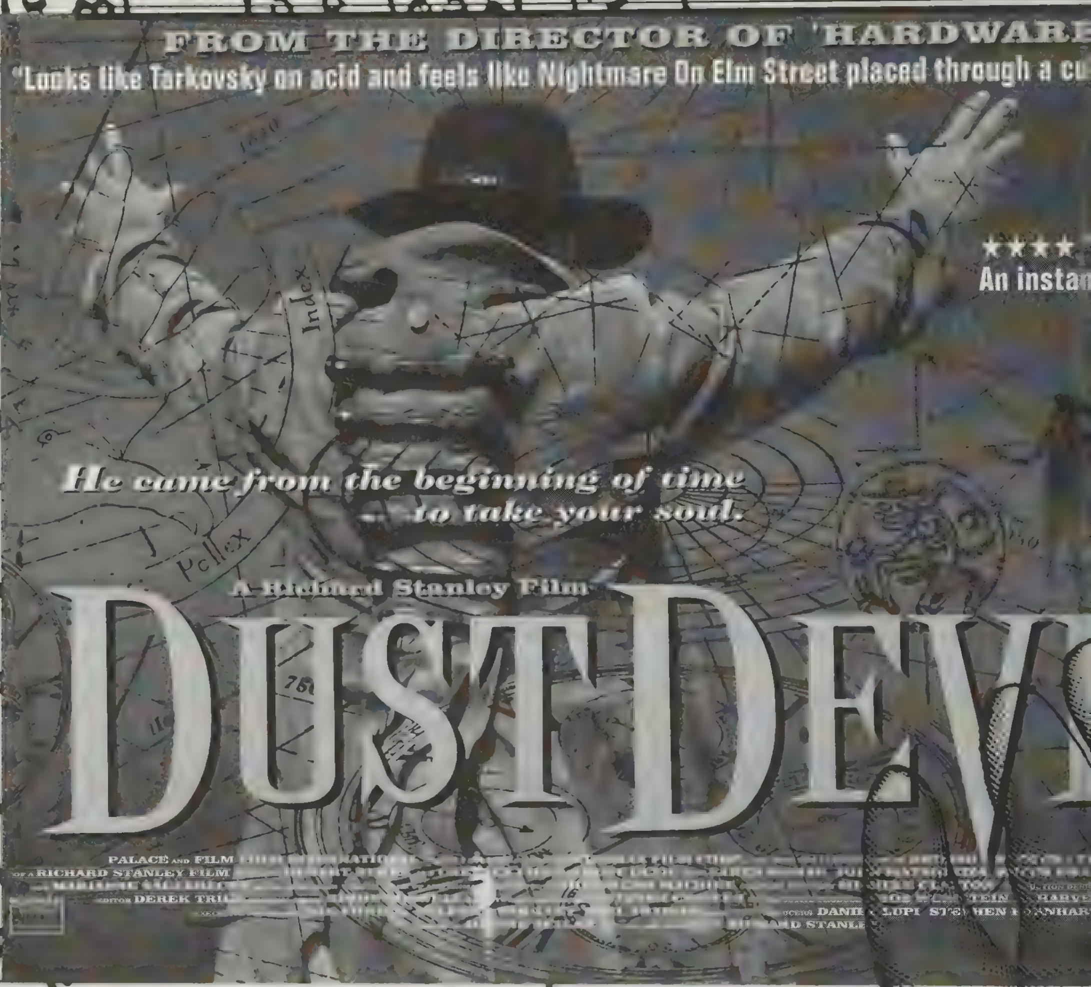
RICHARD STANLEY: I was born twenty-five miles south of Cape Town in a tiny town called Fishhoek, which is basically where people go to die. It's a very beautiful place. It's surrounded by miles of ocean, the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Indian Ocean on the other. Beautiful sunrises and sunsets. And the next stop is Antarctica. You can't get any further south.

My dad was a member of the South African Communist Party before it was fashionable, and a surfing photographer, and my mother was an anthropologist named Penny Miller, who was writing a big fat book on the myths and legends of southern Africa. As a result, I spent most of my formative years being dragged around in the passenger seat of a car amongst, well, Botswana, Namibia.

I got to Namibia the first time when I was four, which is where I first started to encounter some of the locations from Dust Devil. And I spent a lot of time growing up around sangomas, around witch doctors, people who spoke with spirits. My mother was obsessively interviewing them and trying to compile all this oral tradition to one book.

When you're very young, nobody is there to tell you that these things are impossible, or to tell you that spirits don't exist, or that you should be scared of them. Instead, I thought it was the biggest joke or some kind of wonderful, magical trick. Whenever objects moved by themselves I was laughing and looking to see how they were doing it, or thinking that people were casting their voices and wondering how things were speaking from the eaves of the hut. It's only when you get a little bit older, when you get to around seven, eight, nine, that you meet other people at school and you realize that people don't believe in the stuff and that it's not meant to happen in the daylit world. Initially when you were a kid you just wonder why it is that the adults are so uptight about it.




FROM THE DIRECTOR OF 'HARDWARE
"Looks like Tarkovsky on acid and feels like Nightmare On Elm Street placed through a cu
★★★★
An instan
He came from the beginning of time
... to take your soul.
A Richard Stanley Film
DUST DEV

Did you make the film Rites of Passage while you were living in Fishhoek?
I did indeed make Rites of Passage while I was still living in Fishhoek. Rites of Passage is only fifteens minutes long, but it won the National Student Trophy in 1984, which is the thing that got me started. It's basically a caveman movie. I play the main caveman, and it was largely designed around rock climbing. And the main passage of the movie is a sense of a sheer rock face on Table Mountain. Very wild landscape and a lot of incredible animals, leopards and baboons.

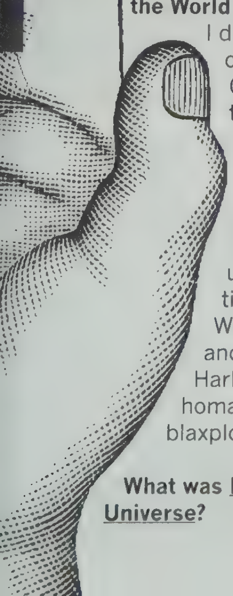
When did you start making music videos?
End of 84 I was forced to leave South Africa when I was drafted into the Army and was forced to desert. I fled over the border into Namibia and then managed to get an airplane to Frankfurt in Germany and got across to Europe. I had done a lot of work for the South African College of Music, basically working for the archival section, going around the homeland states, what was then the homeland states, Transvaal and the Bophuthatswana, filming tribal dance initiation rituals. And when I got to Britain all I had to show was a lot of tapes of strange-

looking people in funny clothes dancing in odd-looking locations, and figured the only work I could really get was music videos.

What were some of the bands you were doing videos for?
The very first music video I did was for a folk band called Fields of the Nephilim. They were hoping to put together a very cheap music video to try and get a record deal. And it turned out that they were obsessed with two things I love dearly—spaghetti westerns and horror movies. And together with Carl McCoy and the other boys, I think we defined the look of the thing. We did the first few album covers and the first few videos. The first video was made on Super-8, only £500, and was shot in one day in a barn. I did all the makeup effects myself. Practically killed myself the night before breathing in all those latex fumes running around with a hair dryer trying to get all the mutant masks set and not sticky by the time we had to apply them.

Probably the best thing I did was the Renegade Soundwave video for Kray Twins, which was shot for only £700. The band really didn't want to participate and wanted to hit us or beat up the cameraman every time they saw us. I think the naked aggression of that promo makes it by far and away the best.

You also shot a music video on top of the World Trade Center.
I did shoot a music video on top of the World Trade Center. This was back in the mid-80s. It was the beginning of acid house, a band called S'Express and a song called Superfly Guy. It was the very first time I was in New York, and up until now it was the best time I've had in New York. We basically got a Cadillac and went and ran amuck in Harlem and did an insane homage to the club scene and blaxploitation.



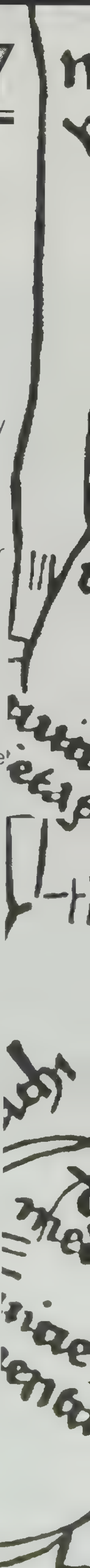
What was Incidents in an Expanding Universe?
Incidents in an Expanding Universe was my second student movie, which was a tough act, because Rites of Passage did so well and won seventy awards and already was embracing such a broad theme, sort of the beginning of human life, and it flashes forward to the end of the world at the end of Rites of Passage. It's all over the place. So Incidents was over an hour long, which was very long for a Super-8 movie, and in fact it's the gestation of Hardware. It's pretty much the same movie as Hardware except that they don't all get killed by the droid. It's pretty much the backstory as to how Jill and Mo met up, what happened to Mo's hand in the first place. Shades, the next-door neighbor, gets a much bigger part in it.

For a Super-8 movie, it really skips a beat about halfway through when a war happens. There's a sequence showing the destruction of the last forest of the free world, which involves flying vehicles napalming a forest. It was a lot of special effects work for Super-8. In Super-8 there's no neg, so we had to figure out an optical printing process whereby we could make multiple passes on the same piece of Super-8. It was pretty tricky stuff.

You also made a 16mm version of Dust Devil.
The 16mm Dust Devil was the third student movie I made and the last of the run. It was the first time I worked in 16mm. I was inspired by a quote that Kurosawa had in an interview. I think it was something to do with all you need to create an epic is two people, one in the foreground looking toward someone in the far background. I thought if we had two people, the big location and some deep focus and maybe one car we could make an epic.

The original Dust Devil is only forty-five minutes long and basically is the story about the girl picking up Hitch, he murders her, he bones her body in the car, then he hops on the train and is murdered himself by the kid waiting on the station with the knife, who still shows up in one shot of the 35mm Dust Devil.

It was a terrifying thing. I mean, there were only about four of us on the shoot. We were deeply out of our depth in Namibia, and a number of frightening things happened,



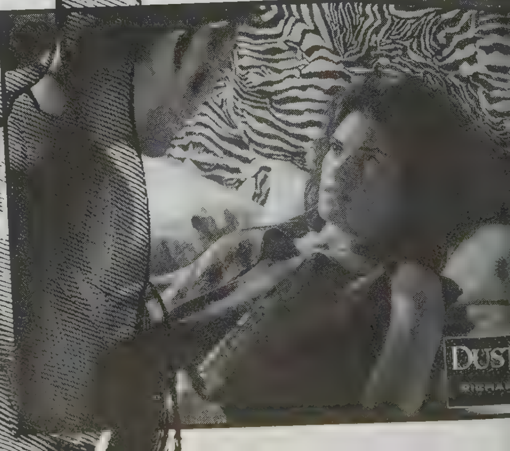
including the main car accident, which is recreated in the 35mm version. We all came back alive, and I'm pleased to say that everyone has always come back alive from my shoots, which is something I'm very proud of.

Unfortunately, the full 16mm Dust Devil was lost in 1989 when I was assumed dead for a while and my then-girlfriend sold all my personal effects. I assume it's still floating around out there somewhere in a can. In the meantime, all I have now are parts of the rushes and the trailer we cut from it.

You can't really teach an old dog new tricks, so every feature I've made so far has always been a remake of an earlier student movie. Generally we work it out first on Super-8 or 16mm and then go back on 35mm and try and improve. And I hate to say it, but some of the 35mm Dust Devil fails to improve on the 16mm version. There are a couple of shots which work better in the 16mm version, like in the canyon sequence.

What works better about the canyon sequence in the 16mm version?
I think it was a number of factors. The crane was better. We improvised a homemade crane, which actually gave us more lift than the rented crane we had. And the music was better. I mean, Simon's great, but at the same time on the 16mm version we had Fields of the

DUST DEVIL
EIN
RICHARD STANLEY
FILM



All images: *Dust Devil.*

Nephilim on the soundtrack because it was out of copyright. It was a student movie. They were doing Morricone covers, and hearing that sort of Once Upon a Time in the West thing on four guitars and that big canyon shot, it still moves me.

How did the feature version of Hardware come about?

It was a labyrinthian process. The Hardware script is one of the poorest scripts I've ever written. It was written inside of one week out of deep frustration. I think I was heavily into Iron Maiden at that point in time and played Flash Of The Blade again and again until my girlfriend got upset. And essentially it was written after having everything else I'd written rejected and taking a sort of average of what they wanted and planting it all together into one movie. Okay, we want one room. We want a girl being chased by a monster. We want a shower scene. We want a gas explosion. We want power drill abuse. We want a chainsaw. We want an exploding droid. We want a fire sequence. We want water, a cliffhanger. And it was written extremely fast.

And then I gave it to a friend who was interested in special effects work. And while I was away in Afghanistan and completely out of contact he gave it to a friend of his, a producer, who thought it was too gothic, didn't like it. Gave it to a friend of his who apparently was reading it in a club somewhere, and it came to the attention of Steve Woolley at Palace, who asked if he could read the script. And then a week later he got back and said he wanted to option the script, except no one could find me to secure the chain of title. I was in the Hindu Kush somewhere. And they had to go to some very elaborate methods to try and get me back and get my signature on the contract.

You can read all about this in a book called The Egos Have Landed by Angus Finney, except that most of it is lies.

Were you happy with the final release of Hardware?

I'm never very pleased with any of the things that I actually come up with. They could always be so much better. Originally the monster in Hardware was conceived as a vehicle for a stop-motion creature, as in the student movies. They wouldn't allow me to use stop motion, so the droid is not nearly as mobile as it ought to be. And we had a lot of scenes torn out of the movie. I mean, it should have been much more violent than it is.

And there were a lot of subsidiary characters in that film who were only in the movie in order to be horrifically killed. They never quite get their moment. I mean, for instance, the very annoying dwarf, Alvy, who is only in that movie because he's meant to get sucked backwards into an industrial shredder, folded in half and spat out the other end in little pieces.

We had it all ready to go. We had the kicking dwarf corpse and the shredder and the furnace. He was going to have his head set on fire before he went through the shredder, as well. But it would've taken two days to do, and we had the pages torn out of the schedule.

And the same with the security guard, Vernon, whose initial demise was elaborate. So again it was about five pages of the script which got torn out. In the current movie he just gets shot in the head and polished off very fast, but it's, to me, disappointing. It should've been a lot worse than it was.

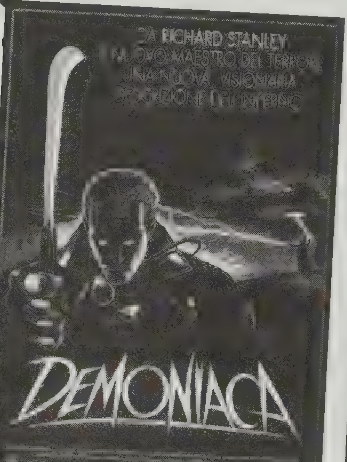
And there's not enough nudity. I mean, every single movie I've made I've wanted to have a penis in it somewhere. I ask for it every Christmas, and so far it's never arrived.

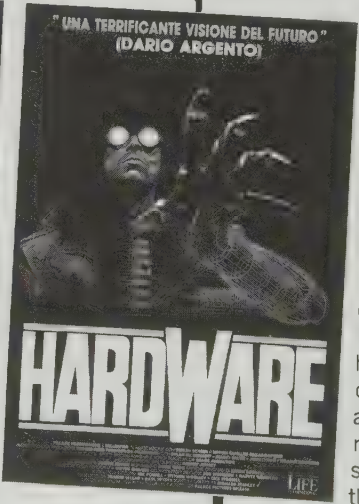
Coming from your music video background, were you friends with any of the artists who contributed to Hardware's sound track?

One of the great things about Hardware was that thanks to the music video days I had a lot of a crazy friends at that time. I did a music video for John Lydon, and initially Lydon was going to be playing Angry Bob, the DJ, but at least contributed the main theme. Then he got into some kind of dispute with Virgin and Iggy Pop stepped in at the last moment. JoAnne, the producer, had produced the Cold Metal video, and the Cold Metal song was featured in the soundtrack.

Then, funny enough, Sinéad O'Connor was originally meant to play the taxi driver. It was during her bald phase. Then she backed out the night before. With a complete panic, we phoned around and got Lemmy to stand in. Lemmy stood in for Sinéad. And he did it for a bottle of Jack Daniels, which I believe he polished off entirely before he arrived on set. It was shot in London in January, and it was snowing and there was sleet, and it was meant to be in America during a heat wave.

The scene is they're in a river taxi on a polluted river and there was strong wind. The taxi was pretty dangerous. We had divers standing by in case it sank. Lemmy turns up completely smashed, and he's just delighted that he had a real Magnum in his shoulder holster. And he was so pleased when he realized it was a real Magnum that he drew it in a big flourish from the holster, and because he was so soused it just flew straight out of his hand into the river, and we had to send the divers down to try and get it out. It sank so deep into the mud we couldn't find it. So in the movie itself he's got a block of wood painted black stuck in his shoulder holster.




" UNA TERRIFICANTE VISIONE DEL FUTURO "
(DARIO ARGENTO)
HARDWARE
LIFE

After that film you chose to make a documentary, Voice of the Moon.

Voice of the Moon, in fact, was shot before Hardware. This was during the time I had given up on the film industry and I went off to Afghanistan. And it was shot on clockwork Bolexes. Anyone else who's shot anything in Afghanistan, they always have to shoot on the roads, because they use electronic news gathering equipment, which you have to plug into your car's cigarette lighters. And as there's only two roads in Afghanistan, and they also put the roads through the driest, flattest, most boring parts of the country, it means that nobody ever takes cameras into the Hindu Kush, into the Karakorums, which is just thousands of miles of river valleys, cedar forests and glacier, and too wild for electricity. So we took clockwork Bolexes, hand cranked, and buried the film stock as we went along, so the further into the country we went the lighter our backpacks got, and then we dug it up on the way out.

We processed it and transferred it, but we couldn't afford to actually edit it 'til after Hardware, when we had some money. I came back after Hardware and found that all my rushes had been removed from the postproduction facility under my name by some of the boys from Wicked Films. And then they blackmailed me over the rushes.

The Dust Devil script had already been around for about ten years. It was the first student movie I had done. And they wanted another movie out of me after Hardware. And they wouldn't give me back my Afghan rushes until I assigned them the rights for Dust Devil, which was the beginning of this whole trial. I mean, in a way Dust Devil should've been the first movie, and certainly shouldn't have been made after Hardware. It was kind of a bit of a career mistake. But I really had no choice, because people had already risked their lives or died over the Afghan footage, and that was more important to me than the rights to the movie, so I had to drop one to pick up the other.

What are some other exciting adventures that occurred during your time in Afghanistan?

Afghanistan really is one of the most amazing countries on this planet. I was drawn to it mostly because of the white spots on the map which are incomplete. Islam only arrived in Kafiristan in 1910. Up to then the

Richard Stanley in Afghanistan.
Courtesy Richard Stanley.

people were pagan. I've always been very interested in shamanism and in the pagan faith. I've got some Native American blood, and it always occurred to me that Native Americans migrated into North America over the Pole and that the Inuits are related to them and so are the people in Central Asia—the Yakut, the Tungas, the Goldi, the Samoyeds.

And down into the Hindu Kush you get people who up to 1910 were still building totem poles, who still had these horse-head markers, believed that their horses carried them to the spirit world on the other side, who had a spirit transformation dance called the Dance of the Animals, the Attani Meli kaishana, where the hunters were possessed by the spirits of the animals they hunt. And I had heard that there were villages in the heart of the Hindu Kush where no one would go because the people there weren't human, but were wolves wearing human skin.

And you saw all these big strong muj with their Kalashnikovs and their RPGs absolutely terrified of whatever was out there, running back into their bases and putting beams over the doors as it got dark. And whatever was out there in the mountains was way scarier than any Scud missiles or any doctored look-down systems. They weren't scared of the Russians, though, and they weren't scared of the Americans, but they were scared of whatever was out there in the mountains, and that really drew me and got the hook in me.

I never quite got on film what I wanted, because the war got in the way, and then later the politics got in the way, because, of course, post-9/11, it became rather an issue.

Tell me about the genesis of Dust Devil.
The very genesis of Dust Devil goes back to dreams I had round about the time of puberty. And I think a lot of adolescents have similar dreams. I mean, this guy in the hat and coat, the guy in the long black coat, whoever the hell he is, always walking between towns, always with a storm coming, always warning that the country is about to explode or there's going to be an earthquake, the big one is coming, or whatever it is. He first turned up in my dreams, and I had quite a large number of them. I haven't dreamt of him for a while, but in fact the very first sequence of Hardware is a direct recreation

of one of these dreams, the guy out in the wasteland looking for something, not really sure what he's looking for. And then he starts digging and digs up this metal skull with camera lenses for eyes, which was a complete recreation of one of them.

From that time on, I think, there was a move towards trying to define him, like a tarot card, trying to actually pin down that imagery. It's certainly an evolution on the Man with No Name. And I think Clint Eastwood went quite a long way down the same line with High Plains Drifter and then kind of changed his mind and pulled back with Pale Rider and decided maybe he worked for god after all. But I certainly didn't create him. We simply tried to define him.

And I thought at that point in time no one had really skewered the basic outline of the myth, the idea that you pick him up, he's in your car seat, he makes some kind of gnomic utterance about the future, and then he disappears off the car seat and you don't know where he went. And I think we had to recreate that in the film. I'm not sure what it meant, but I felt that we had to somehow be faithful to the basic outline.

My mother reported about three different accounts of the vanishing hitchhiker in her book. It was all oral tradition. But she had no idea that these things happened every year all over the world, that you get identical stories from Australia, from America. There's a guy called Jan Harold Brunvand in Salt Lake City, in Utah, who wrote a book called The Vanishing Hitchhiker, which is basically a compilation of accounts of the vanishing hitchhiker from around the world.

What are some of the main differences between your shorter 16mm version and your final 35mm version?

Well, the short 16mm version is very similar to the opening ten minutes of the 35mm version. Basically Wendy didn't make it and got carved up by the hitcher. We couldn't afford to burn a house, so he burned the Volkswagen instead. And at the end of it he was killed by a character who we had never seen before in the movie, who was simply a character waiting in the station, who was waiting to find a complete stranger, someone who didn't belong in the town, who didn't know anyone, so that he could kill them, who had similar impulses going.

The original Dust Devil was shot in the same place as the 35mm Dust Devil. You can't move those places. The Fish River Canyon is the second largest natural canyon on earth, and it was shot right there. And Bethany is a real place. And it's about 300 clicks from the nearest tar road. And I only ended up there because when we were first wrecking the 16mm Dust Devil our car broke down in the middle of the desert. We were attempting to jump a dry wash, and we knocked the oil seal off the head of the drive shaft, fucked up the drive shaft, and we ended up trapped out in the desert for a couple of days.

Eventually we were rescued by police, who towed our car to the nearest town, which turned out to be this godforsaken place called Bethany. Then they said, well, it would take something like six weeks for them to get another oil seal. So we thought the only way to deal with it was to actually try and hitchhike to the nearest large railhead and attempt to get an oil seal ourselves and to bring it back and fix the car, which then started a fairly epic track. We had managed to jump a steam train at the local railhead, and I realized that this was one of the few lines in the world where they were still using steam in the first place and we were at times sleeping rough.

We got caught in a hell of a dust storm while we were out there, too. In real life those dust devils are much more impressive than anything that we captured in the film, and that one that came after us came out of the setting sun with the sun behind it and backlit it looked so much like a pillar of fire. Definitely an object of worship. We got a number of still photographs and then we ran like hell and hid in a dry riverbed and it went right over us and took my backpack and bedroll away. The next day we found the backpack right down the wash in the top of a tree somewhere.

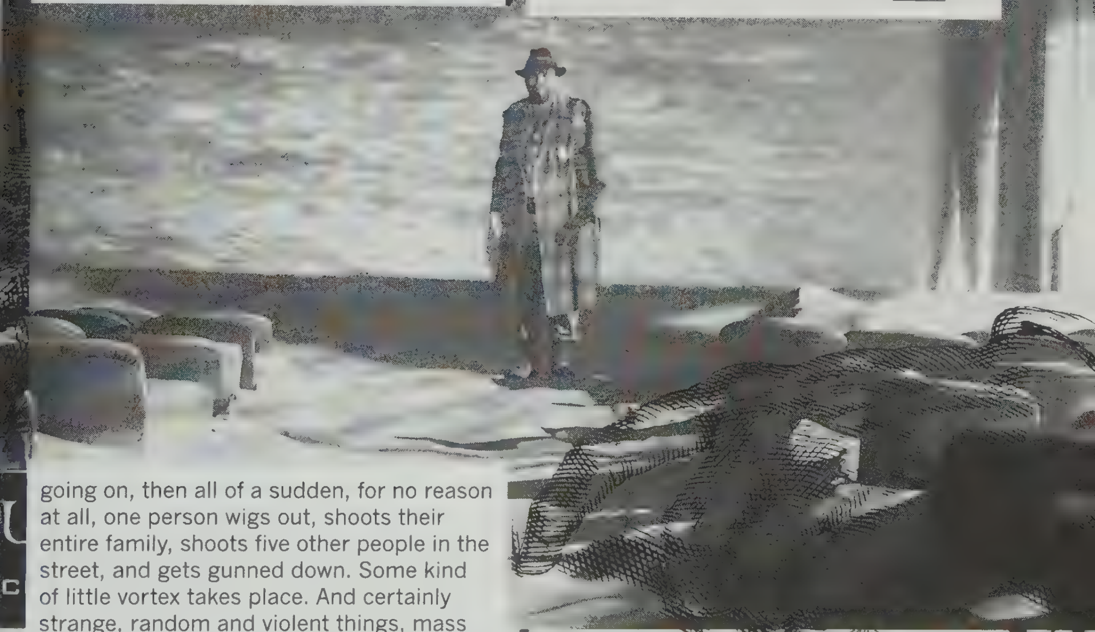
They're that strong.

Very strong, like mini-twisters, absolutely terrifying sort of screaming things. And that particular one was backlit by the setting sun. It looked like it was made out of fire. They come out of nowhere in dead quiet, no wind at all. And suddenly you get this little swirl of motion that just blows up out of nothing and just as suddenly blows back into nothing again. And really that's the structure of the movie as much as anything. Dust Devil is set in a place which is small and quiet and hot, where nothing ever happens. And then suddenly you get this eddy of events with people spiraling around each other which can only end in some kind of blowout.

And this stuff happens all the time in places like that, presumably in middle America and in Australia, too, towns where nothing ever happens, places that are so godforsaken that just years and years and years go past without any change or anything going on, then all of a sudden, for no reason at all, one person wigs out, shoots their entire family, shoots five other people in the street, and gets gunned down. Some kind of little vortex takes place. And certainly strange, random and violent things, mass car accidents, crazy things, do come out of nowhere, but they are surrounded by years of silence. In a way, just the sheer silence of it kind of compels something to happen like that.

Dust devils occur all throughout South Africa and Namibia?

I think anywhere where it's really dry and hot like that. And the great thing is that you can see so far in the desert. You can see for hundreds of kilometers, and it's dead flat.



Zakes Mokae at the flicks in *Dust Devil.*

And you can see these little things blowing up and then running for a while and then blowing themselves out. Really similar to, I suppose, jinns or ifrits in Islam, spurts of dust and fire. But you definitely get the sense that they are little demons or kind of little entities. They've got a very mischievous kind of diabolic feeling to them.

What was the casting process like for Dust Devil?

Well, when we created the 35mm Dust Devil, when I rewrote the script after Hardware and brought it up to feature length, I decided we had to introduce a hero into the movie. There had to be some force of good, something which would be a corrective to the Dust Devil. And it made sense that the logical corollary to the Dust Devil would be water and something feminine. And so we ended up with the character of Zakes Mokae, the cop who has got the missing wife, the fairly angelic figure of the missing wife, who is portrayed like the Black Madonna. Whenever she appears in the movie we see the sea behind her. She's associated with whale sounds, with water and something which is fairly affirmative.

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And that part was pretty much written for Zakes Mokae, who was one of the finest actors to come out of southern Africa. He was someone who had gone through hell during the Apartheid era and had usually been on the receiving end of a lot of violence from the police and from the white community. And it made sense as a way of making peace with the past that Zakes should play a South African policeman, should play opposite type.

I had to lobby for a very long time to persuade anyone to actually put Zakes into the movie, because he's a Zulu. People aren't used to having Zulus of a certain age playing the lead man. There was a lot of pressure on me to cast an American lead. But it didn't make sense for a character who had been living all their life in a small town in South Africa to have an accent from anywhere else. And he was never going to be very sophisticated. He always was the character who could believably have actually come out of that place.

It made more sense to trade off the character of the hitchhiker. Initially I thought with the hitchhiker, if he was a demon lover he'd have to be someone who was sexy, who you'd want to invite into your life. So that meant he would have to be Jim Morrison or Elvis Presley or Clint Eastwood. And that made it tricky. We had talked to Nick Cage at one point, except Wild at Heart put the dampers on that, because that was going down the route of hitchhiker as Elvis Presley. Eventually it sort of spiraled back into being the Clint Eastwood type. And I think it was seeing Robert Burke hitching on the road at the beginning of The Unbelievable Truth that really fixed that one.

Though I have to also mention John Matshikiza, who does a tremendous turn as Joe Niemand, the witch doctor of the film, mostly because John is nothing like that in real life. At that point in time he was lecturing in political science at Yale. He's a very dapper man. And his dad used to edit Drum magazine back in the Apartheid era. And John basically does such a turn in this film. Everything about him, the eyes, the fingers, the scar tissue, the walk he puts on, the stubble, all of it is a characterization. He is in real life a very suave gentleman, indeed.

A metallic shower scene from *Hardware*. Next page: Richard's on-wall storyboards. Photo Shade Rupe

You have a particular score for Dust Devil that helps define the film. How did you conjure the music for that film, and how did you become involved with Simon Boswell?
I was very, very, very fortunate to come across Simon. This happened in the beginning of Hardware. At that point in time Simon had done the score for Stage Fright, the Michele Soavi movie. The first time I had noticed him was doing a rather negligible track called The Maggots on the Phenomena score. Previous to that, he had been a part of the lineup of Andi Sexgang and had apparently met Dario [Argento] at a party somewhere and had filled in for Claudio Simonetti on Phenomena.

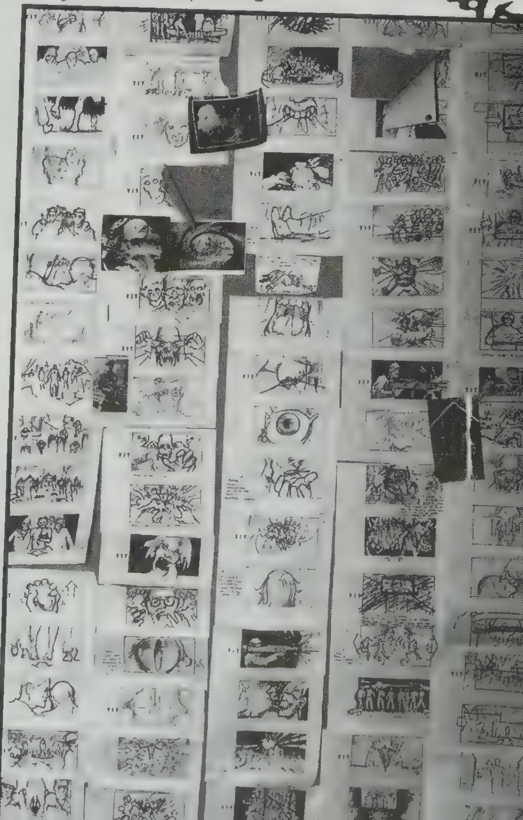
We didn't have any money, and Simon was just starting out, and we had to have just one person working from their home studio. We were very much limited to synth. And of all the people, of course, Simon was the only one who had worked with people like Michele and Dario. The Stage Fright score is a very, very efficient job. And then of course the Hardware score I was deeply impressed by. And since then Simon's just gone from strength to strength. Santa Sangre, Perdita Durango and the Dust Devil scores are probably the best of his works.

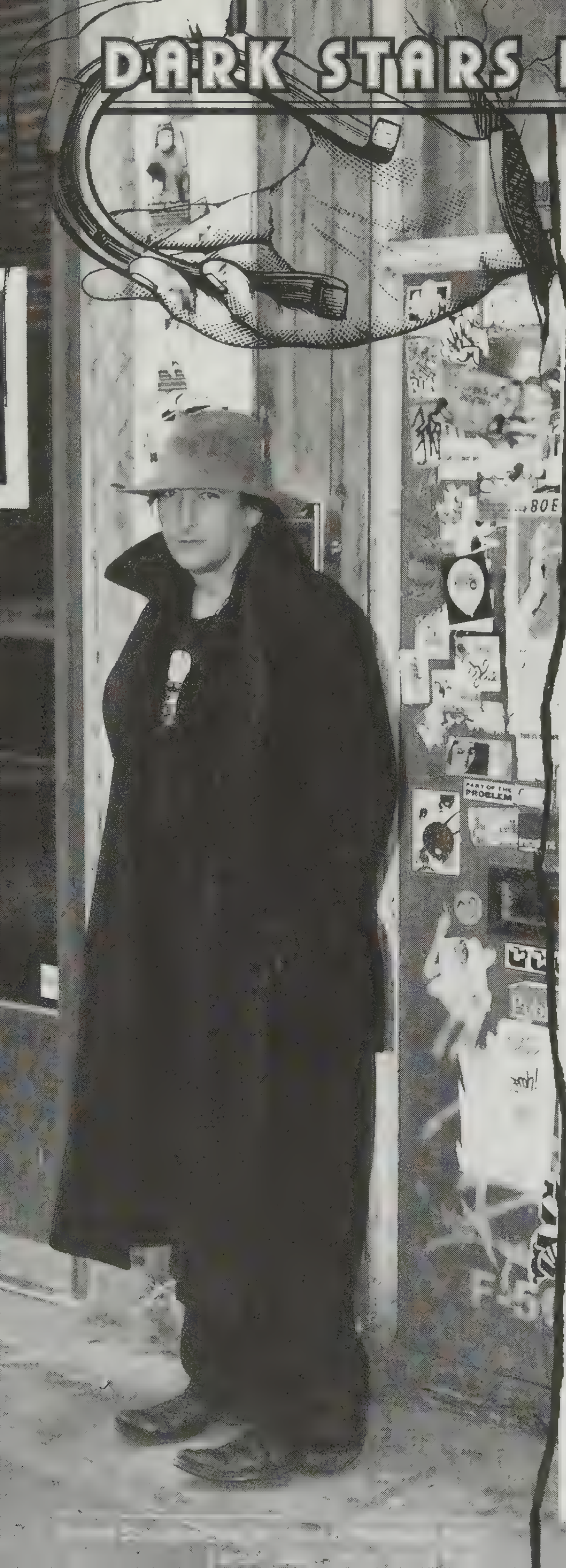
The really sad part about this is Simon's also scored my documentaries, and I think his best score ever is for the Afghan film, for Voice of the Moon. And of course no one ever watches documentaries, and they certainly never release soundtrack albums for documentaries. He never got paid for them, either, so I felt that Simon's been turning out his best work for me for years, and very few people have actually heard it. But he is, to me, probably the best soundtrack composer working in Britain, if not one of the best in the world. It's a great shame he hasn't ever received an award or any kind of official recognition for this.

I know that during the filming of Dust Devil various elements fell apart, but you ended up holding it all together and completing the film.
Well, that is the director's role, in that a lot of people don't realize that ultimately your commitment is to the film itself and to the cast members and the crew and to holding that thing together and delivering. And I could've walked away at the point when the whole film fell apart and kept my money and survived it. But all the people who had gone to so much trouble, who had risked their lives, who had put all that sweat into the thing, just out of a sheer obligation to everything that had gone into it I had to hold it together and keep it going.

It's been about twenty years since we first started with the 16mm version and we were doubling everyone. Most of the helicopter shots were done in one day right at the very, very end, simply by having all the action happening simultaneously and flying over it. Most of the cars had broken down by the end and were simply pushed into shot. I think Zakes' Land Rover is not working in most of the movie and is pushed into the shot almost every single time you see it.

We had no process trailer. It became impossible to shoot scenes while cars were moving. It was a road movie, but we couldn't shoot inside vehicles. So throughout the movie they have to stop and get out of the





car and have little conversations. People are doubled incessantly. If you don't see somebody's face in the movie, it's not really them.

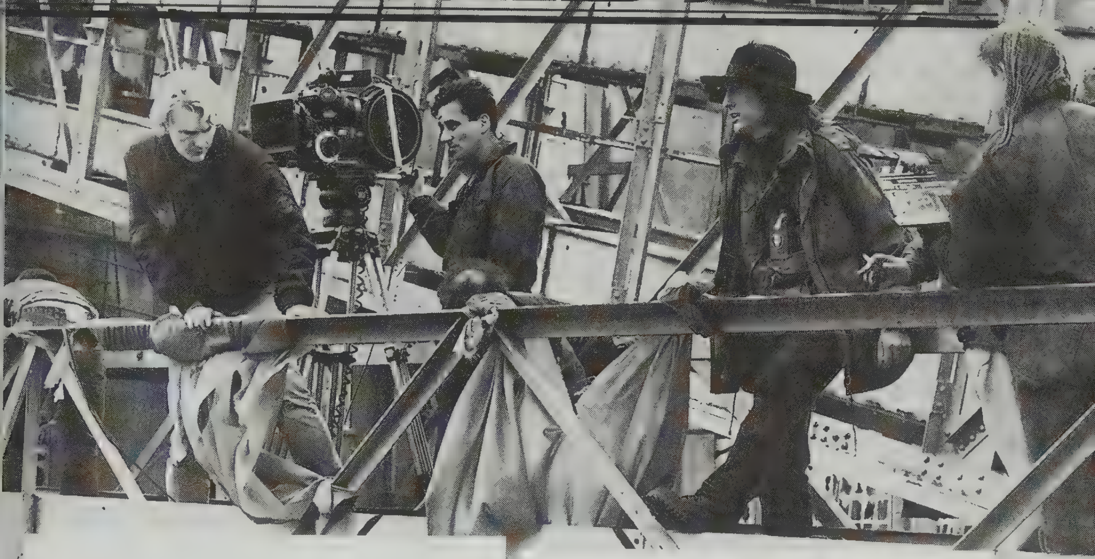
Scenes disappeared from the shooting script left, right and center. Pieces of equipment weren't there. Most of the big props weren't there. There was no postproduction. In one sequence Zakes is shooting at the demon, but there is no demon. There's nothing there. It looks like it's crazy, because you simply can't see what he's firing at. It was meant to be done post, but post never happened.

We couldn't reassemble the cast, because it was too expensive just to get Robert, Chelsea and everyone else back to loop some of the scenes, so there was no ADR, and scenes where there was generator sound or bad background sound we simply couldn't use, we had to drop. We managed to get the voiceover by John Matshikiza done over the telephone by tracking him down in South Africa and getting him into a sound studio and having the tape sent over to us. But it took many, many years, and only now is it actually in any kind of shape where people can actually watch the thing and find out what it was that we were trying to do all that time.

By the end of the film, with so many elements having dissolved, and you're doing everything you can just to finish the principal shooting, how difficult then was going ahead and editing the film to a complete answer print?

Editing the film itself and getting it to the stage where you can actually watch it pretty much destroyed my life at the time. It was a suicidal thing. I can't remember how much money went into that. I mean, it was all out of my own pocket. But I know that at the end of the process I was homeless. I was single. And I was forty-five grand into my credit card. That was just into the red. I don't know how much I was into the black before I started. I wasn't really keeping track. I just knew we had to keep going until we got to a married answer print, and that once there was a married answer print, just one, the thing would exist.

RICHARD STANLEY



Richard Stanley directing *Hardware*.

It was a bit like that Coppola movie Tucker, where you had to just get one of them down the assembly line to prove that the damn thing existed in the first place. And I figured after that no one could put it back in the bottle again, that once it was out word would gather, that people would eventually see the movie, people would know it existed.

But that was certainly a hard process, and the last few weeks of post running towards that married answer print we were running on empty so bad, and there was a lot of residual bad karma from the past which was catching up on us. There were bailiffs after us. In fact, there was a gang of people who were trying to retrieve one debt or another who were determinedly trying to break my legs, and I'd find them waiting for me outside the postproduction suite. It started to get very ugly, indeed.

How does the final cut of the film match up with the intended version you set out to make?

Well, again, it's a lot less violent. We lost a lot of set pieces when the money ran out, and there's not enough murders in the film for my liking. But one good thing about it is it is more of an art movie than it was intended to be, because every time we lost an action set piece, the really big expensive things got pulled away from us, and we'd have to improvise. And a lot of the time totally weird zoned-out things ended up happening in the movie, when obviously some kind of set piece or action moment should have happened, but there simply weren't the days or the equipment necessary to make these things come off.

My main regret about the whole movie is that there's no penis in it, in that we were forced contractually to put boxer shorts on Robert Burke in the car accident scene. I was limited to three buttock thrusts for all the sex scenes in the whole movie. I was only allowed to show male buttocks from behind. And some breast nudity was allowed, but only with the South African actress. No penises. No pubic hair. And I think this really damages the movie. I think it would be a substantially better film were there just a little bit more sex in it.

It pisses me off every single time. It's always the same thing. You've got a nudity clause in the contract. You've got ten different lawyers in the room, and we finally get the sex scene they're all floating around. Everyone's got their lawyers and agents and everyone is watching to make certain that you've got your stipulated amount of flesh. That part of it really, really sucks.

It also forces one to shoot the sex scenes in a way which is so restrained. You can only show it from a certain angle. Like you have to be looking from behind. You have to have missionary position sex. It's very, very limiting. I'm unhappy that the main sex scene between Hitch and Wendy essentially can't show anything. You can show some of Robert's buttocks. You can see it only as missionary position of him on top, girl underneath. And that, to me, is very, very limiting creatively. It's a nasty set of things to be imposed upon one.

All throughout the film there are arcane symbols and scratches on the walls and mixes of blood and paint and images that obviously have some sort of occult reference and that are left there for us just to see and are unexplained. Do those solely relate to some sort of South African mysticism, or are those images and symbols drawn from all sorts of areas in the occult?
Dust Devil does draw on a number of sources, but a lot of it is African. The interesting thing about this is that mythology runs in so many parallels, and so many of the African ideas are identical to ideas you find in Europe and elsewhere. The spiral turns up in Celtic artwork, it turns up in South Africa, it turns up in Native American material, it turns up in aboriginal mythology, usually as a point of emergence or a point of access to the underworld, similar to a mirror or a spring, something where you can enter into the dream time or into the unconscious.

The blood murals also lean towards the Manson murders and right back to Cro-Magnon art and to the original cave paintings, which might have been painted in maybe menstrual blood or hematites, usually only during a certain phase of the moon, usually only during the full moon, and this link is always there between the lunar cycle, the menstrual cycle and the actual rock paintings. This goes back to the oldest forms of religion we know. In a way my whole interest in the Plains Indians and over into Afghanistan was looking for some original faith or some pure primal original form of worship, something which might've come right out of the caves out of the end of the Ice Age.

And certainly the walking guy has been on the road a very long time, and he drags his own mythology with him. At one point in the movie you see some of his small change lying on the top of the table, and we see that one of them is actually a Chinese coin and one of them's a Roman coin, and a couple of them I'm not really sure where they're from. One's a piece of silver from South America and one's something called a Sicanian drachma. He's obviously been around.

And then there's a whole extra strand of mythology coming in through the drive-in movies of that period. The witch doctor isn't just coming out of tribal mythology. He's someone who's got a Walkman around his neck and who has been watching movies and has a workable knowledge of B-movies, Italian giallos. He's playing Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires, for God's sake, a movie which is a head-on collision between kung fu movies and Hammer vampire movies. It's another cultural misfit. And I think this has contaminated the witch doctor's lore, in a way, and he's not exactly a very reliable font of wisdom in terms of being the witch doctor profiler character.

The figure of the Nagtlöper, the Night Walker, who is mentioned in the film, like the vanishing hitchhiker, is an actual figure out of African mythology. What intrigued me about the Nagtlöper was that he doesn't have a reflection. He doesn't have a shadow. He has problems with his image, which seems to separate from him. And sometimes if you see him coming towards you it means he's creeping up behind you.

And he comes at night into your huts and he sucks your blood or your vital forces out of you. And the only way to catch him is to put this magic stick, this *kierie*, across the threshold of the hut, and somehow this roots him to the ground. It's some kind of wandering, restless energy, a perturbed spirit, a revenant spirit, and the only way to nail it down is to somehow earth it. And for some reason you always need a wooden stick. For a vampire, you have to drive a stake through its heart, which also somehow nails it down. And the stick used in Dust Devil is in fact a real *kierie* used for those purposes.

I would say that there's very similar ideas in Afghanistan. I think that if you ask people from countries like this nicely they'll tell you about it. I found lots of odd parallel stories when I was looking for shapeshifters in Afghanistan. I was talking to the granddaughter of one of the former Afghanistan presidents, Mohammed Daoud, and I asked her about werewolves, and she said she didn't know about werewolves, but she knew for sure that vampires existed.

I'm not sure that any of these things are necessarily specific to one country or another, but you find that if you take an average, that maybe we've got different names for these things, like we have different names for god and the devil all over the place, but they behave in similar ways. You notice that the same rules apply.

How was your production staff?
The production was very, very bad. The production manager started fucking the producer halfway through, and the producer had been fucking the production designer at the beginning of the shoot. Then the production designer found out. There was a massive fight in the production office between the production designer and the production manager where they beat the crap out of each other in the production office. And right in the middle of that fight Robert Burke showed up to complain about the plumbing in his hotel room. And I had to stand in front of the production office door and physically block his view with my body while talking about the plumbing just so he didn't notice that the people inside the production office were killing each other.

Dust Devil was never completed the way it should have been. The production company involved managed to go to the wall before we finished shooting. By the time the film was completed, there were only about eight people left on the crew, and the actual postproduction took years. The negative was in one place, the sound was in another. The rushes were stuck in a storage locker up in Rickmansworth. It took us a long time to put this beast together and even longer to get it across the water and bring it to the United States.

It is a cursed movie. Maybe that's because it's got the word 'devil' in the title. Maybe it's because some of the things it's based on really happened. There is no Dust Devil as such in the film itself, but it's contained within the print, and as you watch it, be assured that it watches you back through the rolling bars of its prison.

I heard there was a story about Marianne Sägebrecht on the set of the film.
Well, Marianne's a huge horror movie fan. We met at Sitges in Spain. And it turned out we were both admirers of Legion, the original William Peter Blatty cut of Exorcist III. And Carrie Fisher, by the way, who was the operator on Dust Devil, was the operator on Exorcist III and Killer Kane, both by Blatty. And Marianne said that the next horror movie I made she wanted to be in it. So I gave her the part of Dr. Leidzinger, the mortician, who initially had a much bigger part in the movie and was much more involved in the profiler role.

But, yeah, some very bad things happened on that day at the mortuary. It was a full moon, and we had cast this guy as the morgue attendant. His only role in the movie was that he had to move some corpses in and out with a gurney halfway through the scene. He was meant to come in and say a single line, which was like, "Sergeant Mukurob, Bethany Police Station, on the phone for you. They say it's urgent." One line. And partway through the take the guy wigged out completely, mostly because of the fluorescent lights in the morgue. He had some kind of problem with his brain.

He rode around town selling bibles originally, and we just got him in because he was kind of strange looking. But then the fluorescents psyched him right out, and he started screaming and stamping his feet, shouting, "He's come. The lord is come," and getting into this sort of religious frenzy. And then he just lost it and fell on the ground and started writhing and frothing. Guy Travis, the first AD, and Daniel Lupi, the production manager, managed to pin him down and get a ruler in his mouth to stop him from swallowing his tongue.

And all the corpses just lay there, because it had taken so long setting up everyone had gone to sleep. So no matter how times we called "cut," no one would move or actually get up. And then we had to wrap. And it was Marianne's birthday and we went back to the trailer and got some fresh oysters and stuff and tried to give her a seafood lunch, and partway through lunch she got a phone call from Germany saying her mother had just had a stroke and she had to return to Germany.

Then right after that it also turned out that most of the negative from what we had shot was scratched, so only part of the morgue scene was usable. Zakes complained that he had a feeling, a pressure at the base of his brain, and Marianne afterwards said that it was a problem of having too many psychics in the room. The mortuary day was largely a wash. And as a result, Marianne's scenes in the film are way shorter than they were meant to be. Her character was meant to have considerable more screen time.

I heard there was an actual corpse in the film somehow, and that Hitch's knife disappeared.

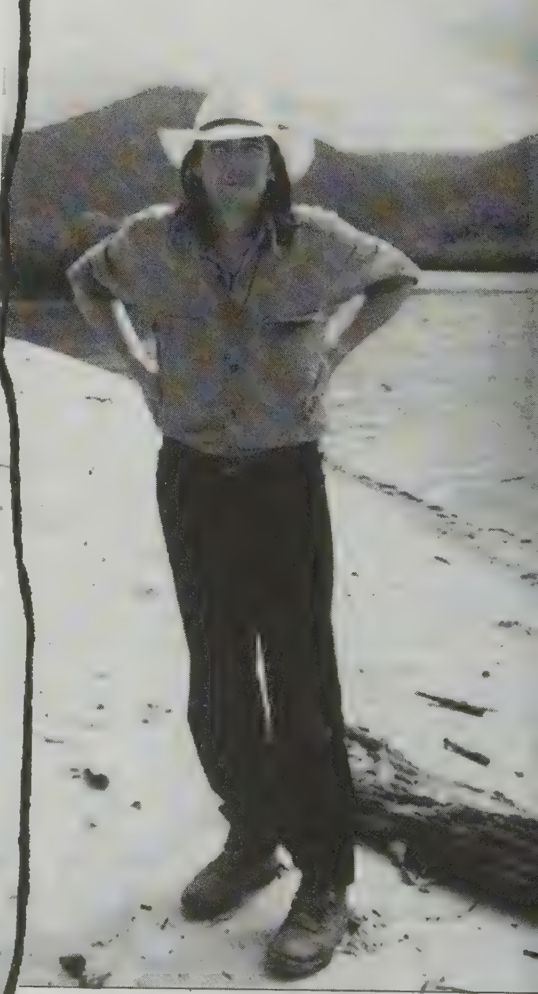
That was actually the same day as the scene in the mortuary. It had happened a couple of nights previously. Someone had broken into the prop house, which is where Ina and Amelia Roux had all the props, and had stolen the knife. Then somewhere round about the time after the oyster lunch and the day in the mortuary, some vigilantes who were working for the production had gone across town, had found the people who had broken into the props house, and they returned the knife, which came back used and sort of slightly cluttered and was placed back in my hand again. It was a full moon. It was booked out for the full moon and booked back in.

Towards the end of the production a corpse turned up, a corpse zipped into a sleeping bag and buried in the sand dunes back of the bunkers where the crew was staying. It wasn't one of ours. Nobody knew whose corpse it was—presumably some kind of tourist, some other thing that had happened.

The catalog of stuff was just pretty much relentless. We lost over forty company vehicles in a single move, completely written off, just relentless car accidents. Mr. Horn, the estimable second unit director and unit muralist, during the workout at Spitzkop, found uncut diamonds, which freaked the hell out of him, because it's illegal to own uncut diamonds. He saw them glittering on the ground at night and picked them up, and they were actual diamonds. He got extremely paranoid after that and was hiding his diamonds and was frightened. He sort of went the Fred C. Dobbs routine, like in Treasure of the Sierra Madre. Everyone was sort of spitting out in different weird ways.

I also heard someone on the crew had an actual close encounter of the first kind.

A close encounter of the first kind is when you see a flying saucer or you see an unidentifiable flying object that doesn't land and nothing gets out of it. This happened to the second unit crew, which was under the direction of Mr. Immo Horn, who also shot

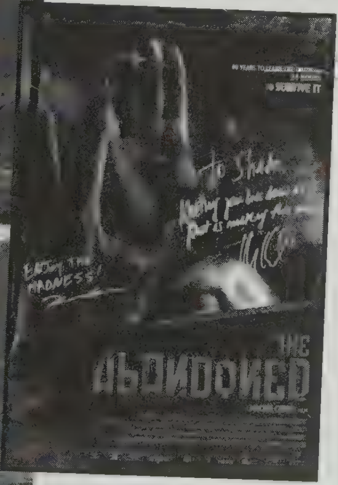


This page: Richard Stanley, somewhere else. Courtesy Richar
Stanley. Next page: Advance poster for Nacho Cerdà's *The Abandoned*; Beautiful knives used in *Dust Devil*. Photo Shade

my documentaries. John Gaeta, the special effects creator of the Matrix movies, was the camera operator. He was the second unit camera operator. The first one had already been canned after going crazy. And they had a driver who was a South African soap opera actor called Phillip Hen. They all hated each other and disagreed on everything normally.

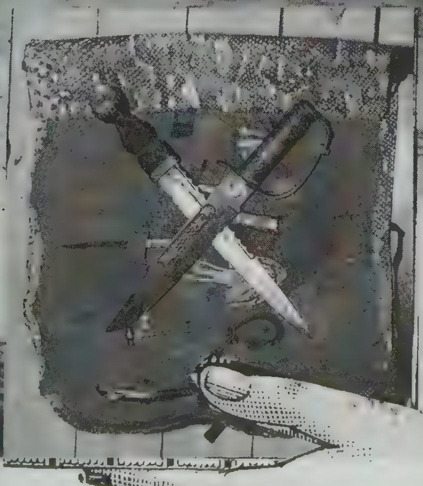
Of course, I wasn't there. They spent weeks out in the desert shooting these time-lapse shots, and I only saw them after they got back into town. They all looked completely strung out and pan-fried and basically claimed that they had seen these weird triangular light formations moving overhead while they were shooting out in the other canyons. And their pickup truck had classic close encounters electrical problems, turning itself on and off. Every time they shot the thing and locked the car, the headlights would go back on and the stereo would suddenly turn back on.

They claimed they had shot it, that they had captured the thing on film. Then it turned out there had been an electrical fault with the Norris motor on the second-unit time lapse camera and absolutely nothing on the film, which caused everyone to treat their claims with great derision.



How do you feel about Dust Devil today? Do you feel that Dust Devil has at last reached a termination of some sort?

Well, I finally stopped dreaming about him, which is a good sign. I no longer see the walking man in my dreams. But I still have to carry the print around, and it's very heavy. I think it's about one reel too long. It's slightly longer than Hardware, and, as a result, my shoulders really feel that thing when you carry it from coast to coast. And I get the nasty feeling it's going to be on my back for a while longer. It's been about twenty years so far and an awful lot of rough road. And I don't think it's entirely ready to relinquish its grip. In fact, it's only just made it to America, and America is a massive new territory for the walking guy. He has been waiting a long time. He can smell a town or a country waiting to die from thousands of miles away. And I have a nasty feeling he's only just started out here.



Whatever else could you do besides being a filmmaker?

Well, long before I was a filmmaker I was an anthropologist and a physiologist, and my initial desire was to move into some area of psychobiology. Filmmaking was a distraction. And since the events of Dust Devil and Dr. Moreau, I've returned to my roots.

A few years ago I had the good fortune to be the BBC's man in Port-au-Prince in Haiti, which gave me the chance to actually get to grips with voodoo. And to a large extent my short documentary, The White Darkness, does kind of support a lot of the ideas in Dust Devil, certainly the universality of the mythology and also the African witchcraft itself, and the somewhat awkward interface with Western culture.

The time I spent in Haiti served as closure on a lot of things. To an extent, The White Darkness resembles what the end of Dr. Moreau might've looked like. It also has some outtakes from the Dust Devil score by Simon Boswell. It's sort of a weird kissing cousin to some of the things that Joe Niemand is telling us.

I also felt that in a way it was absolution for other things. Haiti is a country where it's populated by freed slaves. My dark blood comes from my great-grandfather, who was a tobacco plantation overseer who fucked an Indian girl. And by going back and living amongst the freed slaves, I felt that I had been forgiven for that. I was told by a possessed woman at one point that I would not be punished for what my ancestors had done. In a way, my karma was leveled. The fact that I was accepted by the voodooists the way I was and that they initiated me into their faith and that I was able to become something of a houngan as a result was certainly a great reward for the years of study that went into it.

Time is a human construct, and outside of this paradigm it probably doesn't exist. And in Dust Devil that's represented by the straight freeway that cuts through the middle of all that chaos, the straight timeline of the events. And it comes out of the past, in a way. The first cars we see on the road seem to belong to the 1920s or 30s. And at the end of the movie we start to see vehicles in the road which are a lot more futuristic which are coming down the road out of the future. And these scenes are meant to match the beginning of Hardware. Hardware is the logical follow-on. You'll notice that the sky grades over into a violent red to actually match the opening scene of Hardware.

And that armored column that comes down the road was part of the Namibian army. This is the joy and the beauty of shooting in the Third World, where life is cheap, in that we were able to bribe SWAPO, the South West Africa People's Organization, to lend us an armored column for the day, just like we got the support with the local police force. All of those police officers that did the road blocks and the rest of the movie are real local policemen, and every time we wanted them to stop the traffic or do something like those vigilantes working for the crew, we just got on the walkie-talkie and asked them to do it.

And, as a production company, we had more money and we had more power than anyone else in that small town. And for the time we were there, we were effectively in charge of it, which was certainly one way to get my revenge on the country I had grown up in, all those years of being chased by these people, being arrested by them. It was fantastic for a period of weeks to actually be in charge of them and to give them orders.

We only had the full armored column for a few hours, and it was certainly a race against time, but it's a beautiful thing to have your own armored column even for a short time. There's something about heavy armor, about tanks, which I've always loved. The smell of oil, of open spaces, of coffee, of women, they're just great things.

It's a rush. To have your own helicopter, it's just—there's nothing better than commanding a platoon of tanks. I would like to be inside one. The amount of visibility you've got is minor, and everyone else in the landscape can see you coming. Yeah, tanks are beautiful. They smell good. It's a tricky thing. I mean, what does pussy taste like? Like oranges, coffee, engine oil. Tanks smell good. I like tanks. And the sound of them are terrifying, where you hear them coming. I had the Gary Cooper For Whom the Bell Tolls experience. ◉

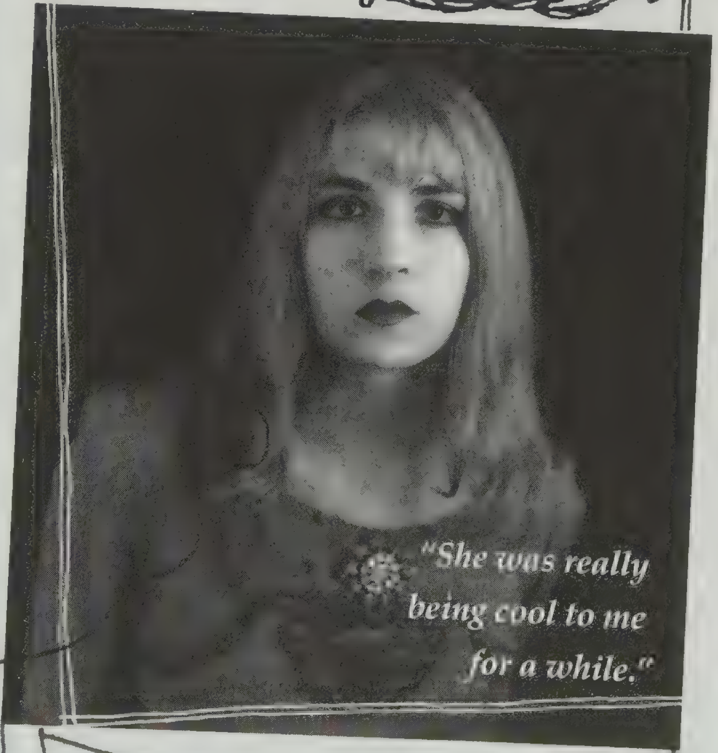
NAAAAAY!

It's Dame Darcy!

The femme fatale of the underground comics circuit is a true DIY lady of the fetal night, creating her first comics on her own before landing an early contract with the famed Fantagraphics Press. Meat Cake was born and soon the Dame found herself with a mess of underfolk to assist in her world domination, from Lisa Carver of Rollerderby to Lisa Hammer of The Venture Bros. and Mors Syphilitica. Having conquered New York and Los Angeles the Dame now finds herself sporting a more domicile domain in the Pacific Northwest.

Darcy and I first met through her illustration for a story in Funeral Party and my shooting an unreleased short film with her as star (an image from that film landing on the back cover of Meat Cake #4). Now the fantasmic filly has matured into her current status of full-fledged prancing pony with her work for the Penguin release The Illustrated Jane Eyre and Merrill Books' Gasoline, the basis for Darcy's dream film project. Darcy and I caught up while her short films for Lisa Hammer were being transferred for the Arcanum Entertainment DVD release.

DAME DARCY



"She was really being cool to me for a while."

FRIEND THE GIRL

FOLD HERE
TO STAND

From A. Scott Hamrah and Chris Fujiwara's Check Out Time, 1991. All photos and artwork courtesy Dame Darcy

SHADE RUPE: Dame Darcy, how did you get to be a Dame?
DAME DARCY: I knighted myself when I was eighteen.

Where were you? Usually a Dame, I would think, would come from someplace fancy like England or France. Where are you from?
I'm from Idaho.

That's great! The Dame from Idaho. Were you in Idaho when you were eighteen?
No, I was at the San Francisco Art Institute.

So you'd already gone out into the big world.
Yeah.

What was going on in Idaho that drove you out into the big city?

Well, Idaho, it's a really beautiful place, and it was great as a place to grow up as a kid. I think drinking a lot of fresh water and air and all that stuff makes you pretty healthy and stuff like that. But then the winters are nine months long, and by the time I was a teenager, it was starting to crack my brain. My brain froze, and I started going insane.

My whole teenage life was a cross between Napoleon Dynamite and Twin Peaks. And then, finally I got a scholarship, I got to go to the San Francisco Art Institute, and I started to put out books and records. And I needed a name that was recognizable. And so, that's why I knighted myself.

Dame Darcy. I always liked alliteration. What kind of work were you doing in Idaho that you were able to earn a scholarship to the Art Institute?

I was doing books, little comic books. And I was a cartoonist for my school paper, and I kept winning awards as the school cartoonist, which was kind of cute. My grandpa said he was really proud of me for that. I was a really bad girl. I was like kind of bad at school in general. So, I knew that if I didn't have a strong portfolio and try to get into an art school, that there was no chance for me to succeed at all.

Did you smoke cigarettes and get into fights?

Yeah, you know, the whole shtick.

Did you have little Daisy Duke shorts, or is that more of a Southern thing?

No, I basically dressed in a nun habit. I had two different looks. One was that I had this black Guatemalan mourning shawl from the 1800s. I just put it over my head and looked through the holes, so I looked like Cousin Itt or something. I'd wear that, and a long black dress.

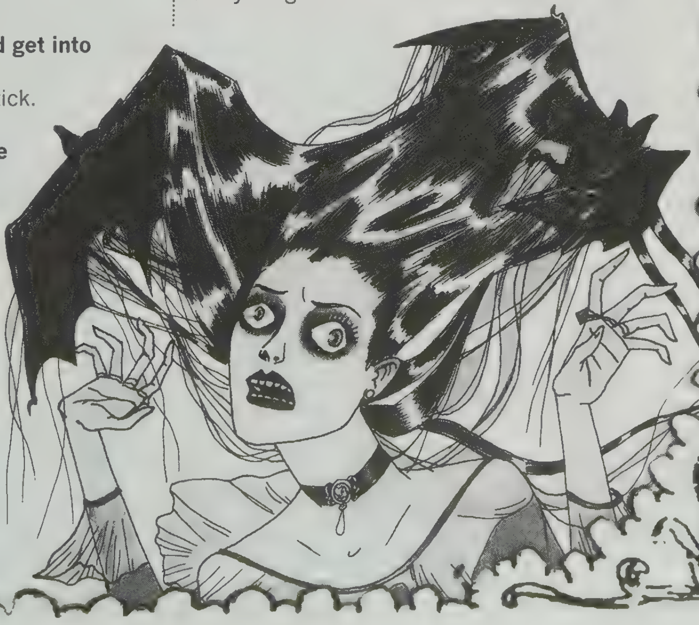
I didn't want the jocks to harass me and try to beat me up and threaten to rape me like they always did, so I started acting really, really scary. Another look I had was to wear a short, tight mini-dress and try to look really old and sophisticated and kind of Gothic slutty.

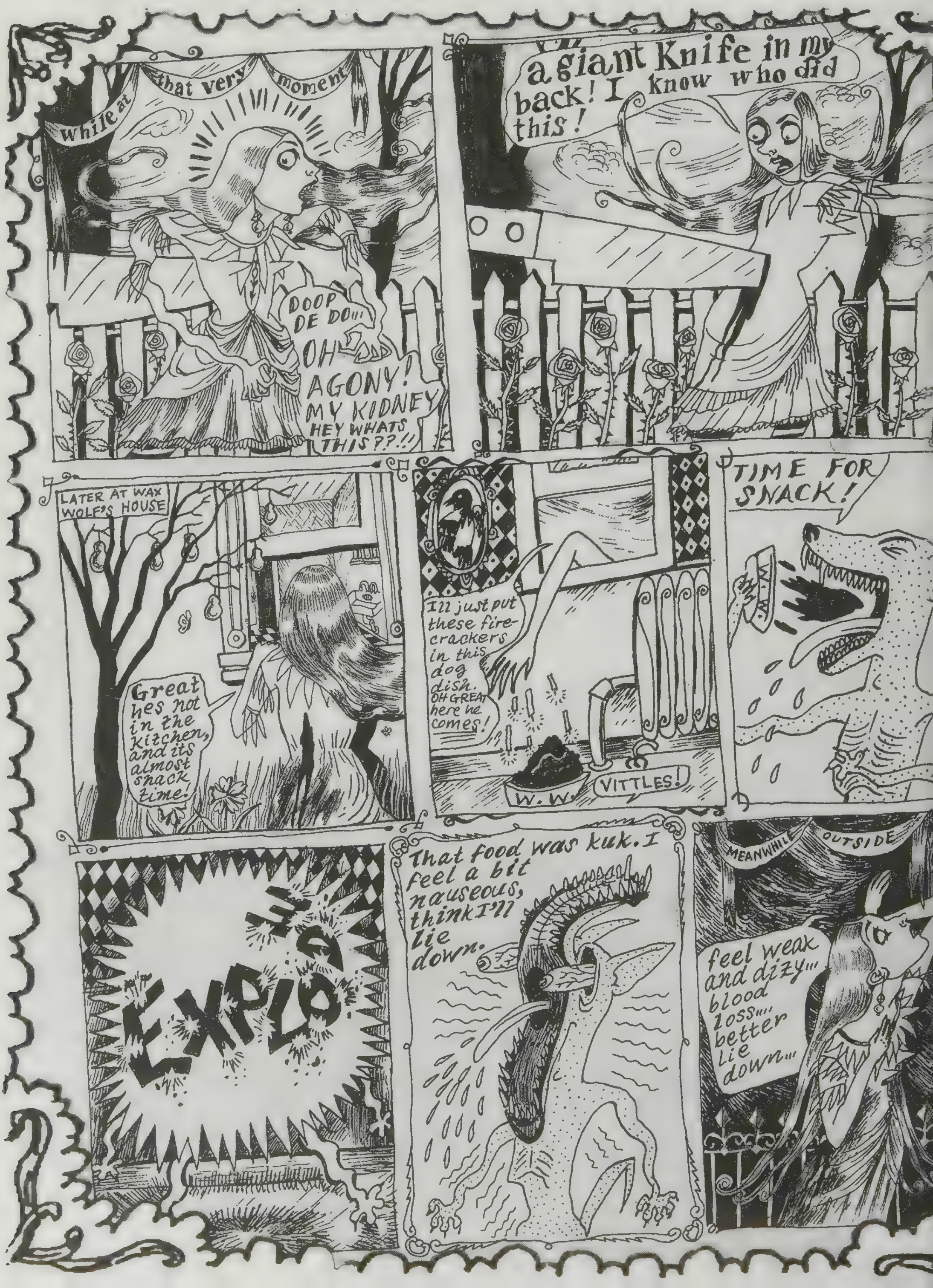
Were there other Gothic kids in your school at all?

Oh, god, no! People used to say I looked like Christina Applegate, though. Like on Married with Children with the big crucifix? Because she was blonde, and she would wear heavy Gothic jewelry and a mini-dress.

You said you were already doing comic books when you went to college. Were people publishing these, or were you doing these on a photocopy machine?

I was self-publishing them. Then when I was going to the San Francisco Art Institute, I had a much older boyfriend who was already in a rock band, living on his own. And I had a friend who worked at a record label who helped me mail out my stuff as part of the record label. And I had a friend who worked at a copy store who helped me print everything for free.




while at that very moment
DOOP DE DO!!!
OH AGONY! MY KIDNEY
HEY WHATS THIS??!!
a giant Knife in my back! I know who did this!
LATER AT WAX WOLF'S HOUSE
Great hes not in the kitchen, and its almost snack time!
I'll just put these fire-crackers in this dog dish. OH GREAT here he comes!
VITTLES!
W.W.
TIME FOR SNACK!
EXPLODE
That food was kuk. I feel a bit nauseous, think I'll lie down.
MEANWHILE OUTSIDE
feel weak and dizy... blood loss... better lie down...

I think if I hadn't gotten that kind of distribution and that kind of printing and that kind of free mailing... If I wasn't hooked up with all these older kind of established punk rock people who were very DIY to show me how to be DIY and help me with it all, I don't know if I could have started my career at seventeen like I did.

But, I think part of the reason that happened is because, in Idaho, I had a lot of time to think about what I was going to do when I got out of Idaho, and how I was going to start this. And so, by the time I got out, I was ready to go. And to this day I have the same career, really, as I've always had, even then, but it's just on a bigger scale. And getting bigger.

How many comic books did you do before you went into the Art Institute?
I was on the school paper doing regular comic strips every week, called Tumor Humor, about people that lived after the Apocalypse. They all had tumors and they glowed in the dark, and it was retarded. They had all these ridiculous little puns and stuff. And then I started doing Meat Cake when I was seventeen. I did maybe three issues of it.

How many did you do of each issue?
My dad had a photocopier, and if I could buy the ink powder stuff for it, then I could print whatever I wanted. I'm not sure how many I made. Maybe 500 of each. And I had glitter on every Dame cover, because I was obsessively insane or something. There's one I did in high school, and two I did not in high school. And then, by the time I was twenty, I think, is when I got my first publishing deal, with Fantagraphics.

Had you done other comics before then even?
I drew my first book when I was two.

A whole book?
Yeah, it was a little book about cats in love. I had cats with hearts around their heads, and then cats with kittens, and cats looking at the moon. It was really cute.

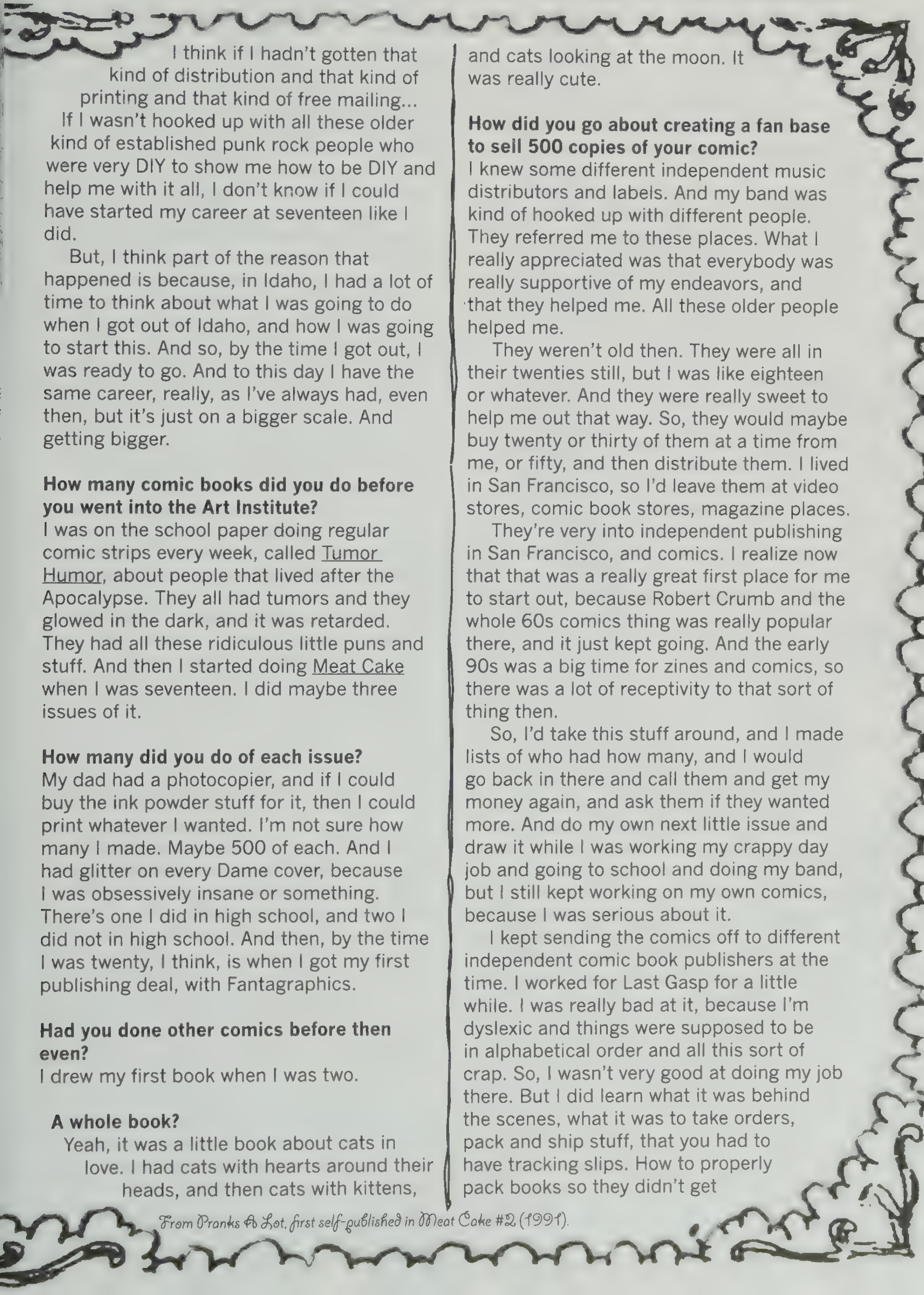
How did you go about creating a fan base to sell 500 copies of your comic?
I knew some different independent music distributors and labels. And my band was kind of hooked up with different people. They referred me to these places. What I really appreciated was that everybody was really supportive of my endeavors, and that they helped me. All these older people helped me.

They weren't old then. They were all in their twenties still, but I was like eighteen or whatever. And they were really sweet to help me out that way. So, they would maybe buy twenty or thirty of them at a time from me, or fifty, and then distribute them. I lived in San Francisco, so I'd leave them at video stores, comic book stores, magazine places.

They're very into independent publishing in San Francisco, and comics. I realize now that that was a really great first place for me to start out, because Robert Crumb and the whole 60s comics thing was really popular there, and it just kept going. And the early 90s was a big time for zines and comics, so there was a lot of receptivity to that sort of thing then.

So, I'd take this stuff around, and I made lists of who had how many, and I would go back in there and call them and get my money again, and ask them if they wanted more. And do my own next little issue and draw it while I was working my crappy day job and going to school and doing my band, but I still kept working on my own comics, because I was serious about it.

I kept sending the comics off to different independent comic book publishers at the time. I worked for Last Gasp for a little while. I was really bad at it, because I'm dyslexic and things were supposed to be in alphabetical order and all this sort of crap. So, I wasn't very good at doing my job there. But I did learn what it was behind the scenes, what it was to take orders, pack and ship stuff, that you had to have tracking slips. How to properly pack books so they didn't get



From Pranks A Lot, first self-published in Meat Cake #2 (1991).

screwed up in the mail. And how much shipping and post office stuff it takes. I learned who the different independent publishing companies were. I was able to learn who was applicable to my kind of thing.

I would send my own books off to these places all the time, and ask them if they'd like to publish it. I did it on a regular basis. And I started entering contests. I started working a lot doing illustrations for Rollerderby, which was Lisa Carver's zine. And doing record covers for different bands.

How'd you meet Lisa Carver?
I saw a Suckdog video, and I saw her zine, and I thought that it was really fun and cool, and I thought that I'd just write to her and ask her if I could do illustrations for her zine. She wrote me back and we got along and everything was pretty cool.

She was living in San Francisco at that time?
No, she was living in Dover, New Hampshire. She moved to San Francisco, I think, because I was there, after we went on our first tour.

One of the things I liked about the early 90s is that if you wanted to do your own comic book or you wanted to be in a band, then you had to really work at it and kind of have your crap together. You had to, geez, collate all of those things and walk around and call everybody. If you did a band, you had to promote your band. You had to do fliers and you had to get it written up in magazines, and once it got written up in magazines, the magazine is there for people to say, who's this? Forever.

It wasn't like you were competing against 200 retarded bimbos on the internet who don't really do anything, and what they make is virtual, so anybody could write some stupid blog and put it up on the internet, and everybody does. And, of course, I do now, too. But it's just to promote my real things that are real.

Not to say blogging isn't real. It is, kind of, especially if you're a good writer, you can write in any medium. What I'm saying is that in a hundred years, how many of these people's blogs are going to matter? Books from a hundred years ago still affect me and mean something to me. Music from a hundred years ago still is around, still is valid, and people can hear it and it means something. It's in existence.

To me, that's the point of art. Paintings, books, music, these things exist a hundred years from now to keep affecting society, to keep changing things, to keep showing your vision, to make a difference, to show why you even came to this world. And after you die, your legacy is left behind.

In this virtual age of immediacy and of people just wanting to have pop fame, I don't think they're thinking about that stuff. And I think that by proxy that's not real art. I think it's good that people express themselves. I think people should be creative, and I like that there's a lot of ways that different people can do multimedia and get exposure and have their views. Like, for instance, I'm saying all this, but at the same time, and I really hate Britney Spears, let's say, but at the same time I really love that weird gay kid who's really into Don't Hurt Britney Anymore or whatever. I think he's amazing. And he wouldn't be able to be that kid, that Don't Hurt Britney guy—

If it wasn't for the internet.
If it wasn't for the internet. He was taken out of some nightmare in Alabama and is now doing some crazy, fantastical gaiety in Los Angeles because of the Don't Hate Britney thing. He made his own way out through it. And I think that's cool, I think he's a real artist, because he's clearly expressing some actual angst, but in general that guy's an exception. And there aren't a lot of people that are like him. I mean, who else is like the Don't Hate Britney guy? Oh, I know. Perez Hilton. Is that another one?

That's some dotcom with gay gossip or something?
Yeah, I love him, too, a lot. He's another one I really love, too. If he was in the early 90s, he would be a zine. But

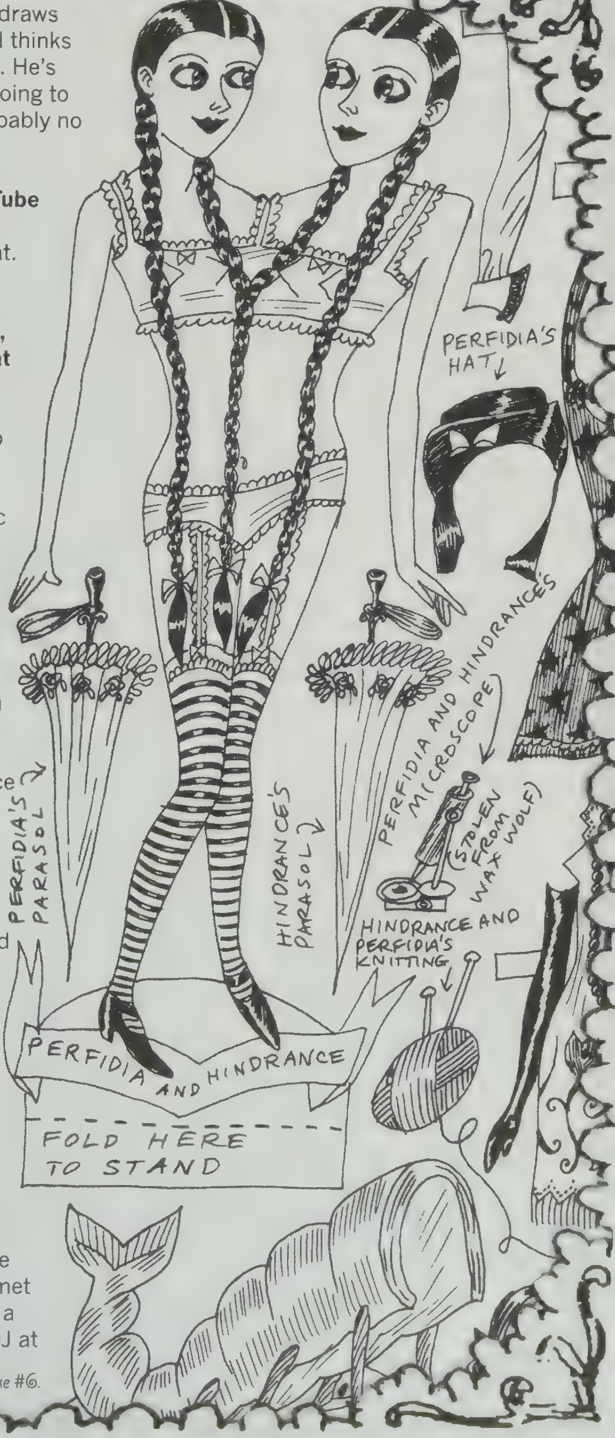
now what he does is, he just draws cum all over everyone's faces and thinks it's really funny. I think he's hilarious. He's another example. But where are they going to be in a hundred years? Who knows? Probably no one will remember or care.

Well, 80s music videos are all over YouTube now. There's some art in there.
Right. It came back again in a new format.

There are the internet flashes in the pan. But it seems that moving visual art, especially now that people are looking at things on their iPods, can have a longer life.
Yeah, well, that's the next thing. I want to do all of the movies that we've made, all my animation, maybe even excerpts of my new feature film based on my graphic novel Gasoline, whatever. I think I want to start doing them as podcasting, streaming. I've started a community center, started on a website, because all these places, FaceBook, MySpace, these things, they're just the next trend that comes down the pike and then everybody goes on to the next one. And I feel like if I create my community space on my site and make it a really great place where people can meet and have a community, that it's a real thing, it's a real community for people who all have this in common. Not just, "everyone, look at me," in common.

That they'd have whatever it is that had brought them to my site in common. And that they can meet each other there, and that it's part of a community. And as somebody who's from Idaho, in the middle of nowhere as a kid, who really desperately wanted to get out and meet other people that are like me, be in the big world, I feel like if something like that had existed, I would have totally gravitated to that.

And I got out of Idaho before I graduated by writing to people out of the back of Propaganda magazine. And I met my boyfriend at the time, who's still a good friend of mine. He was a DJ at



Cut-out doll from Meat Cake #6.

KXLU in L.A., and I met other people through that. When I got my scholarship and did go to the school, I had a way out and I knew people already outside of where I lived, which was part of my plan.

You also took some film courses at the Art Institute.

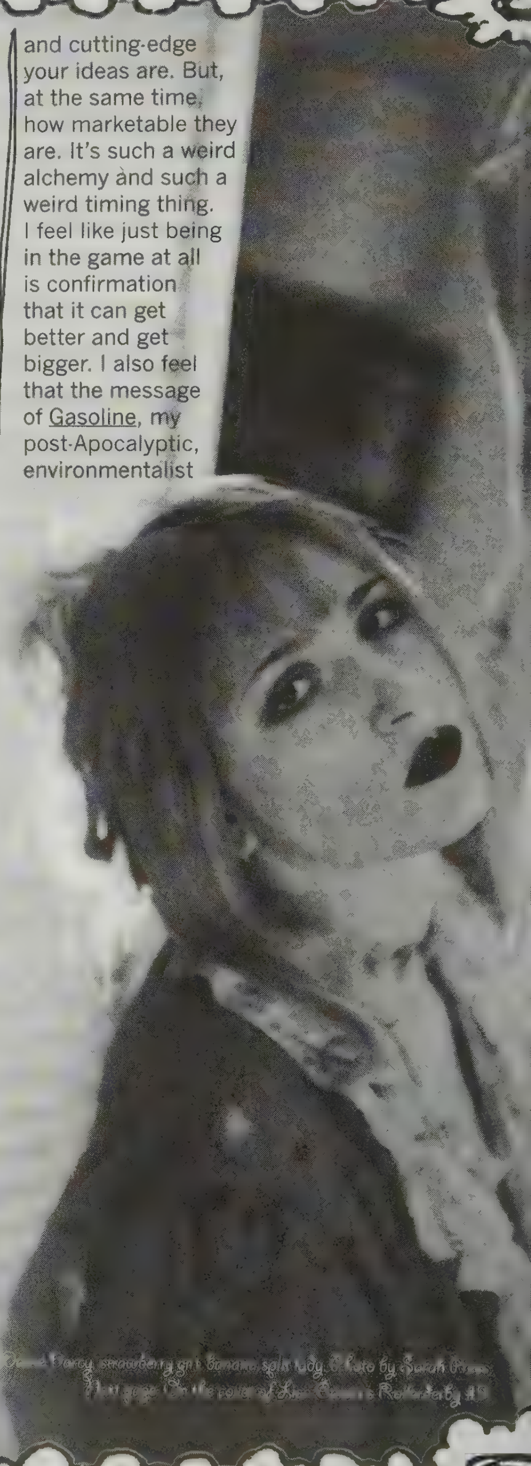
Yeah, I majored in film, and it's funny because this whole comics thing, this whole sequential art thing—I've always done comics, I've always loved them, but I always wanted to be a filmmaker and animator. I started realizing that I'm a filmmaker and animator, and as the creator, it's kind of got to be on my own terms. I have those skills and I can work with other people and I'd be happy to do that, collaborate. I do that a lot. I don't have the kind of skills of a layman, really. It's more like, if you like my style, you'll hire me.

I think by having my fourth graphic novel, Gasoline, made into a feature film, and having my art represented by Sloan Gallery and having that going down in New York City, that these things will start propagating more and more, but for me it's not even about having a kidney-shaped pool or any of that stuff.

It's about having health insurance, and it's about having a stable life, where you kind of know how much money you're going to make every month. Because I've been freelance for twenty years now, and at some points I've been doing really good, and then there's other times when it wanes and it's really scary. And I just want it to be more stable.

That's the whole thing about fine art. I feel like it's not about the skill particularly. Although I am a skilled artist, a trained artist, there are billions of those. It's more about the voodoo. That your paint and your lines and your images and your ideas are worth—what makes them worth five dollars? What makes them worth $5,000? What makes them worth $5 million?

Just how precious and magic you are. How much magnetism you can draw to yourself. How timely and relevant and cutting-edge your ideas are. But, at the same time, how marketable they are. It's such a weird alchemy and such a weird timing thing. I feel like just being in the game at all is confirmation that it can get better and get bigger. I also feel that the message of Gasoline, my post-Apocalyptic, environmentalist



[illegible] Photo by Sarah [illegible]

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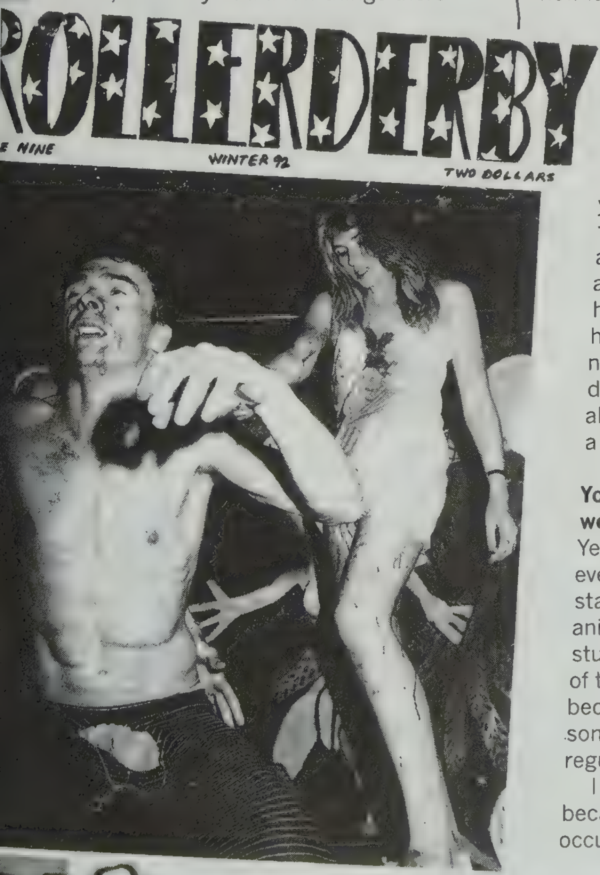
rock opera, is really timely. It was shown to me through a vision, before all these things were as prevalent in society as they are now.

I think part of it was to help me help the world, and also, by proxy, help myself. I just can't watch all this stuff go down all the time and not say something about it. I was working, writing my book and working as a public school teacher in Hollywood, and our funding got cut and I lost my job and I only got paid $400 every two weeks or something crazy like that, and had to buy all my supplies for my kids on top of it, on a regular basis.

Is that normal?
It happens a lot. They have a budget at the school, and they had a few things there already. But if I wanted a certain something, I'd have to get it myself a lot. I'd go to the ninety-nine cent store and get it for my own class, because the kids didn't have it at the school.

Once it got cut, I got really upset. But instead of becoming despairing and giving up, I thought, okay, that gives me more time to work on my book and get this published. And instead of teaching 300 students or something, like I have, I'm going to teach how many people by making this book? Thousands, thousands, thousands. And say my message in a bigger way. I can always return back to teaching one on one, but for me, this movie is a teaching tool. Gasoline, the graphic novel, was a teaching tool, and also, it's to inspire people. Because that's how it's all going to change.



Did you have dreams this big when you were first entering the Art Institute?
Yeah, it was weird. I wanted to get a TV show, and I thought I was ready to get a TV show when I was nineteen years old. If I could have snapped my fingers when I was nineteen and make anything happen, I would have had an animated TV series on TV. I would have had my band be like rock stars. I would have had my comic books and graphic novels be the biggest possible, and do feature films and animation. That's always what I've wanted to do. Even as a little kid, I wanted to do all that.

You also did some acting when you were at the school also, right?
Yeah, well, I've always been a performer, ever since I was a little kid. When I started majoring in film and doing animation and being in the bands and stuff, acting just made sense. Like a lot of the film stuff I did, I just acted in it because then I didn't have to try to find somebody to not be flaky and do it on a regular basis; I could just do it myself.

I didn't really think anything of it, because I'm not shy and it didn't occur to me to even be weird about being in front of a camera. If it really comes down to it and I have to shoot and edit and act and do all this stuff in my own movie, I can and will. But ideally I like other people, like name directors and some environmentalist actors and all that. And other musicians besides us to do the music, and me just to be the art director. Because I wrote the damn thing, and I want to just have control over the way it looks, really.

You also had a good teacher for DIY epic filmmaking at the school.
I worked with George Kuchar. He was my teacher. He started with comics, too. He had a bunch of comics he'd made in the 70s or something, and he had them there at the school.

How many of his productions were you in?
Three or four.

Do you remember the names?
I don't because we were just shooting them every day, and they just seemed really random, and then when they were cut together into movies, I don't know what movies had what scenes, because it was really, really random. But they were really, really fun and crazy and funny.

Do you have copies of any of those?
You know what's weird? One of my friends from art school got back in touch with me, and she had one, but I didn't get a copy from her. It's a real shame. I'm pretty good at documenting things, and having copies of stuff.

What was the response to your first book with Fantagraphics?
Geez, when that came out, I'd just moved to New York City. I moved to New York in 93.

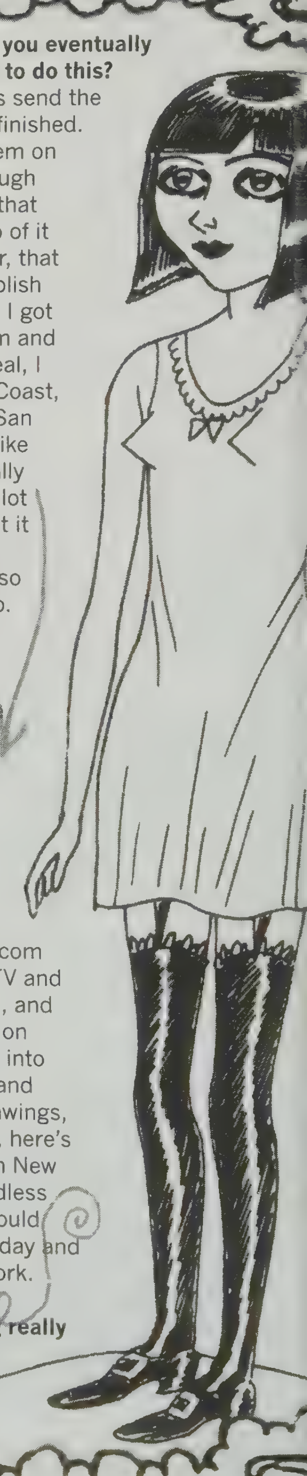
You approached Fantagraphics, and said, Do you want to do my stuff?
Yeah, and also, Pete Bagge helped. He gave me a pretty good referral, and he was really nice.

So, they contacted you eventually and said, We'd like to do this?
Well, I would always send the Meat Cake that I'd finished. And I was doing them on a regular basis enough and showing them that I would keep on top of it and have it together, that they decided to publish me. And then when I got published with them and had a publishing deal, I moved to the East Coast, because I felt that San Francisco seemed like a town that was really fun, but I wanted a lot more. I thought that it had a glass ceiling.

You can only go so far in San Francisco. There was a big publishing thing in New York then, and I could do freelance illustration and comics, and that there'd be a lot of ways for me to get work, and I could just hustle a lot.

I made my little animation reel, and called Viacom and walked into MTV and walked into Viacom, and walked into animation studios and walked into publishing places, and said, Here's my drawings, here's my portfolio, here's my reel. Hire me! In New York there were endless places to go. You could just wake up every day and go there and get work.

So, you were doing really well when you first came to New



York. People were accepting your drawings?

Yeah, it was really great. I did an illustration that was published in the New York Press as a little cartoon. They paid me for this illustration, but the illustration was publicizing a show that I had at CBGBs. Thurston Moore came to that show and met me, and then I opened for Sonic Youth. And those shows were all just playing the banjo or whatever. I realized the best publicity is publicity where you get paid to publicize your own thing.

New York was a very different city then.

Way different. I think I've been fortunate in some ways, and this is how. When I first started my publishing career, my underground comics publishing career, underground comics were really hip, and there was a lot of receptivity to that. So, the doors were a little bit more open, it was easier to get into that. And then, when the whole dotcom thing went down, I started making tons of money off that, and working with Alan Moore. This was in the mid to late 90s.

How did you meet Peter Bagge?

I entered a 'Win a Date with Stinky' contest that he had.

Did you win?

Yeah. I won a date, and I got to have a little comic that I drew on the back of his comic. And a lot of people seemed to see it and really respond to it. And then those guys were signing, the Hernandez brothers and Pete Bagge, Dan Clowes. I would always go to their book signings. I knew it was going to be my next profession. I wanted them to be my publishing company. So, I made some effort.

How'd you meet Alan Moore?

My publishing company called him. Alan Moore is absolutely a delight, I have to say, and has taught me a lot about witchcraft that I didn't know. He's a real mentor, and

MEAT CAKE
MEAT CAKE

The Sailor (Jeff Jensen) and The Mermaid.
From a photo series by Brett Douglas.
Inset: Cover of self-published Meat Cake #1

really funny and awesome. I just adore him to death.

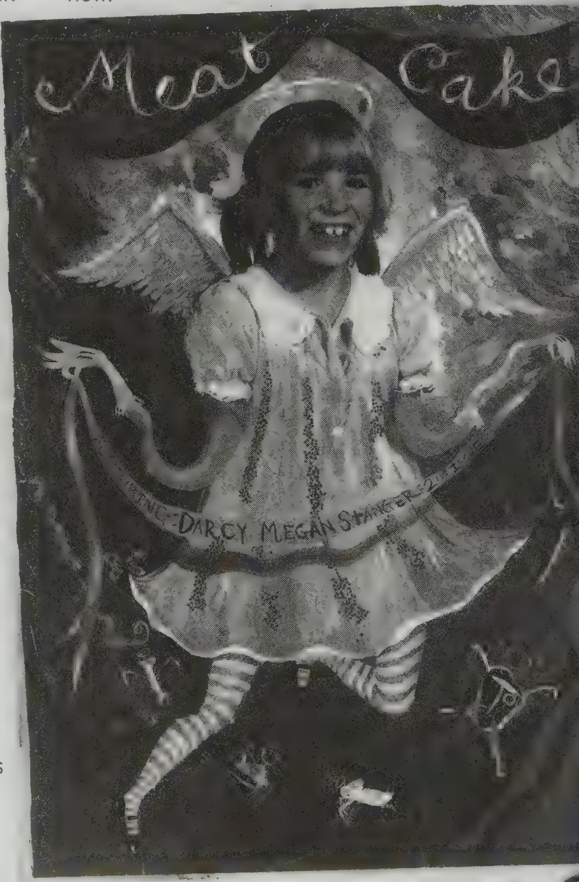
Fantagraphics was your publisher then? Yeah, it's still Fantagraphics. Meat Cake is still published through Fantagraphics, and Meat Cake 17 is coming out this summer. I'm promoting it with a book called Comic Book Tattoo, which is a comic book compilation of different cartoonists illustrating Tori Amos songs. And that's all coming out and being publicized at ComicCon in San Diego this year. And I'm using that, of course, as a platform to publicize Gasoline, my next graphic novel, which is coming out in October of this year.

I think that in the early 90s it was easier to get zines and comics published. It was easy to get hired by lots of different online companies that were looking for online animation and comics for their sites, to make them more interesting or whatever. And I would republish the same comic in five different places and just make $5,000 a month and not have to do any work, because I'd already done it all, which was a miracle.

Then that all popped, and New York got bombed, and a lot of the newspapers and stuff had to cut back. And what they cut back on were comics and illustration, and that whole scenario changed. Everything went topsy-turvy. I was living in L.A. at the time, because I'd been given the vision of what Gasoline is about, and was told that New York was going to get bombed and to move to Los Angeles, so I could actually be at the forefront of the Apocalypse, and learn what the Apocalypse was really about for my book. Which I did. And then I moved back once it was over, because once the book has been written, and once my screenplay has been written, because I don't need to know any more now about the Apocalypse, thanks, I can now go on to my next phase.

I think when that blow hit New York, and also I attribute—what's it called, that horrid TV show? Sex and the City. I think that led to the homogenization of New York City, and that New York started to become more like L.A., and L.A. started to become more like New York.

But now I think I'm on the verge of the next thing, which is that graphic novels are very popular to be made into feature films, environmentalism is really popular, and witchcraft and the occult has been seen as really popular, and has made tons of money with Harry Potter and wizard movies. The atmosphere for my kind of work is happening now.



Pre-Fantagraphics Meat Cake #2.

Photo Marcelle Dujour.

Gasoline, when I first conceived it, was really edgy and these things had not been made mainstream yet. And now, there's other people that have laid groundwork for my book, even though my book was being written while they were getting published and stuff.

Where did you do most of the short films that you've been involved with?
In New York.

With Lisa Hammer.
Mostly with Lisa Hammer, but I've done a lot of stuff on my own and with other people, too, different directors.

How'd you meet Lisa?
It was funny. I wanted to do a public access TV show, and then use my public access TV show as a template to be able to pitch it to different places and get a real TV show. It would also be a forum, in Manhattan, that tons of people would see in the meantime. So, who knows what I would get? And I did see many different things come out of that.

I shot a little bit of it, and I was in an editing room, and we needed to make some kind of something. I can't remember what we were doing in the editing room, but we went there. My friend who was with me said, There's another Victorian girl sitting out in the lobby. And, before Gothic Lolita, this look that I had wasn't really that all over the place. I didn't know that many people who looked like that in the 90s. I mean, it's still not like everybody looks like that, but anyway. There's a whole scene in Tokyo.

What kind of look would you say you're talking about?
I just wanted to look like a doll from 1919 or something.

And this is how this woman in the lobby was described to you?
Yeah, that she looked like me. I was amazed by that, because not very many people looked like me, like that particular way. So, when I saw her, she looked just like that. She had waist-long red, ropy curls and she was wearing some kind of dirndl or something and had these layers of petticoats and a fan.

What's she doing in a video editing suite? She was editing something, too. I told her I wanted to do this TV show called Turn of the Century, and I wanted to have silent films and animation, and have it look really wacky, and kind of timeless, and kind of old school. I really love silent films. So we decided to collaborate. Lisa and I ended up making four years of these episodes. We have over 100 episodes today.

Wow. Were you two the sole creators of the show?
Yeah. But what was funny is we started making them, and everybody's telling us, Well, what you're doing is pretty, there's a lot of time you're going to put into this, and you're not going to find a lot of other people that give you films that look like this, because that's not very common, blah-blah-blah.

But we ended up getting tons and tons of other people sending things in constantly. So, apparently, I think if you make something and you magnetize it and you really want it, and you deserve it, then you'll get it.

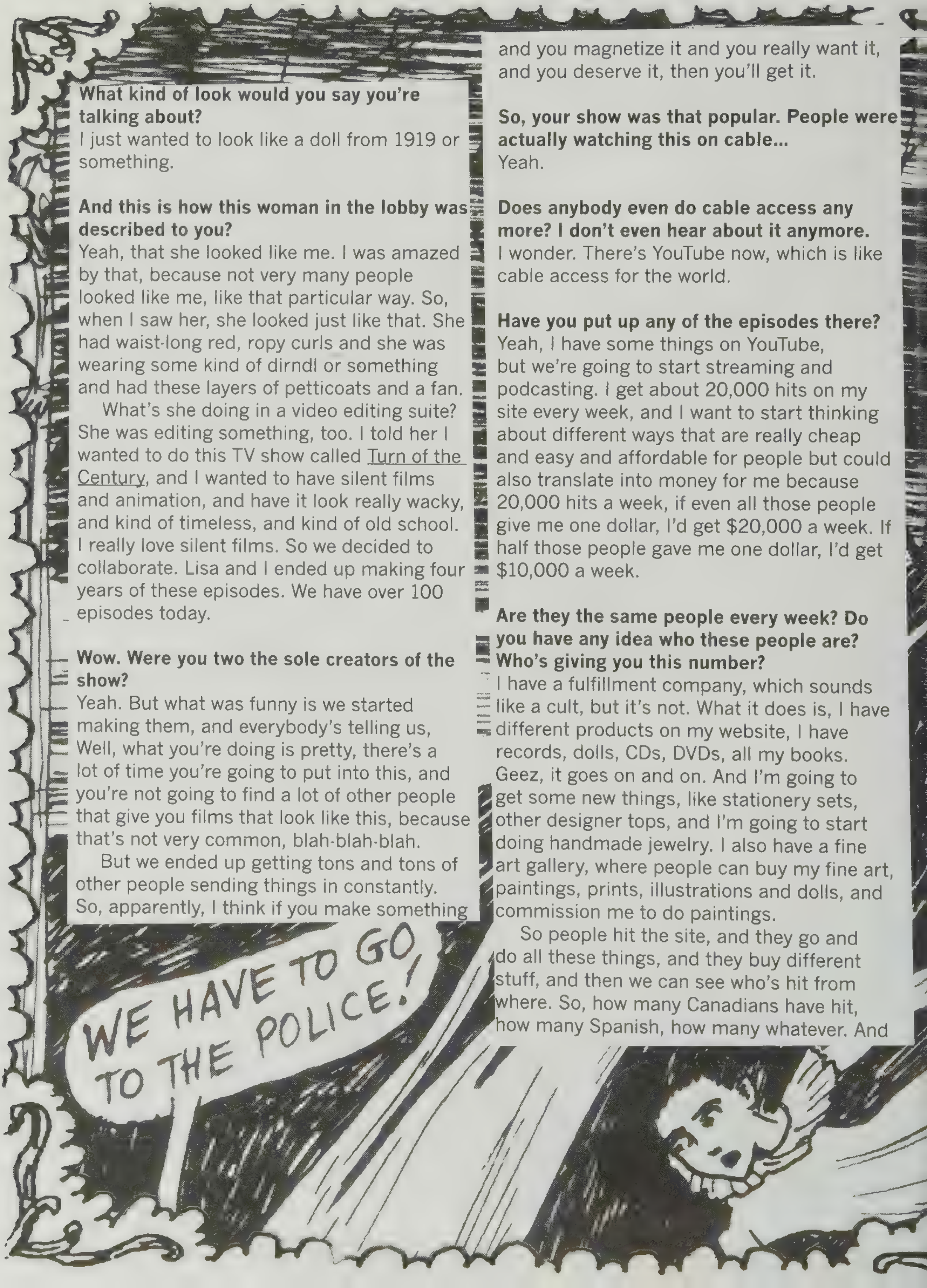
So, your show was that popular. People were actually watching this on cable...
Yeah.

Does anybody even do cable access any more? I don't even hear about it anymore.
I wonder. There's YouTube now, which is like cable access for the world.

Have you put up any of the episodes there?
Yeah, I have some things on YouTube, but we're going to start streaming and podcasting. I get about 20,000 hits on my site every week, and I want to start thinking about different ways that are really cheap and easy and affordable for people but could also translate into money for me because 20,000 hits a week, if even all those people give me one dollar, I'd get $20,000 a week. If half those people gave me one dollar, I'd get $10,000 a week.

Are they the same people every week? Do you have any idea who these people are? Who's giving you this number?
I have a fulfillment company, which sounds like a cult, but it's not. What it does is, I have different products on my website, I have records, dolls, CDs, DVDs, all my books. Geez, it goes on and on. And I'm going to get some new things, like stationery sets, other designer tops, and I'm going to start doing handmade jewelry. I also have a fine art gallery, where people can buy my fine art, paintings, prints, illustrations and dolls, and commission me to do paintings.

So people hit the site, and they go and do all these things, and they buy different stuff, and then we can see who's hit from where. So, how many Canadians have hit, how many Spanish, how many whatever. And


WE HAVE TO GO TO THE POLICE!

then, we can also see what they're hitting. And what they seem to be hitting the most is the Doll Game. And the Doll Game's free, but they're playing the Doll Game a lot, and there are links to my site from other places. They're really hitting the Doll Game a lot, and so I want to develop an online Doll Game where some things are free, and you win points. I pretty much have it all developed, but we need a tech person that would understand our unique vision because it's not like a normal video game. It doesn't look like that. It looks like its own thing.

When you were doing the show, Turn of the Century, you had a couple people on there who were fairly well known. How did you meet Tiny Tim?
I met Tiny Tim in an airport on my way to Colorado, and I am a huge fan of Tiny Tim. I had a record, God Bless Tiny Tim, when I was a kid. I was five. I used to listen to it over and over. I have that record still, and I could sing every song on both sides, front to back, like a jukebox, because I know that record so good. When I saw Tiny Tim in the airport, I was twenty-three years old, and I had to say, "Tiny Tim, I love you!" And of course Tiny Tim loved me.

Why of course Tiny Tim loved you?
Because I was this cute little blonde twenty-three-year-old singing these weird 20s songs. I knew all of his wacky 78 Victrola songs because I was obsessed with that kind of stuff. I loved Tiny Tim too, and I knew all his songs. I knew what he looked like. I recognized him in the airport. Tiny Tim was big in the early 70s, and I was born in the early 70s, so I don't know if a lot of people my age, in their early twenties, then, would have recognized Tiny. I think he was more of a 60s and 70s guy that people from that era would recognize. I don't know if young, pretty girls recognized Tim that much at that point, but he just loved me. And he said I could play at Spooky World with him, and I drew comics for his little Tiny Tim fan magazine and stuff, and then we were playing at Spooky World, and I met Elvira.

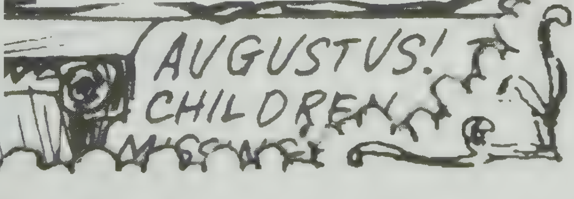
Oh, that's great. Did you get your picture taken with Elvira?
Yeah, well, I did, but I don't know where that is. But I had footage of me playing with Tiny Tim. And what was funny was we figured out some little songs to do together with me on the banjo, but then his guitar player was some white trash hick, and he got so jealous of me playing with Tiny that I didn't even get to play my song with him on stage, so we recorded it backstage, and we got it on video. And that's how I met Tiny Tim. Then he died, and it was really sad. That was really sad when he died. I was really glad I met him during my lifetime after he influenced me so much as a kid.

And you also had another guest on your show with some notoriety.
Yeah, Courtney Love was on the doll-crafting segment, and Courtney really loves dolls.

She even wrote a song about doll parts.
Right. She's obsessed with dolls.

How did you and Courtney meet?
I met her in London. It was about a year after Kurt died. I was doing a show in London at some big theater that had really big red velvet curtains. I didn't set the show up, so I don't remember where the hell it was. But she came to the show with the rest of Hole, so I think that's also when I met Melissa Auf Der Mar and Eric Erlandson.

Yeah, she was the bass player, after Kristen Pfaff died. That's great Courtney dropped by your show. She had already achieved a level of fame, and for her to be on a public access show...
I know. It was funny.



Did she do that show in New York?

She did. She was in New York then. We were pals. I met her in London, and she was like, "I love your mermaids, and I love your comics, and I love your dolls, and I want to help make you famous." She was really being cool to me for a while. Like, she'd call me all the time when she was in New York. She introduced me to Anna Sui. I started designing t-shirts for Anna Sui. She flew me to Seattle, and I painted fairies and stuff in Frances Bean Cobain's bedroom. She bought tons of my dolls and gave them to Winona Ryder and Sharon Stone and different celebrities she told me she gave them too.

How did you paint the bedroom?

With little fairies and stuff on the walls.

Did you take any pictures?

Yeah, and they're online. I've done interior design for different places. I designed a club. I designed a window display for Amoeba records in Hollywood. I did some stained glass doors for Margaret Cho's house. It goes on and on. I met Drew Barrymore either through Courtney Love or at a Hollywood party or both. But all of this stuff doesn't really mean anything unless any of these people actually want to be my real friend or want to contribute to the ideas and ideals behind my movie Gasoline because, for me, it's like fame for fame's sake is, I guess, okay. You get free things. But it doesn't really mean anything unless you can put it towards doing something that's going to benefit people or their lives.

When did you form Death by Doll?

Just like the Waltons. Darcy and family

Next page: Flyer for Dame Darcy and Lisa Hammer's Turn of the Century show on Manhattan public access.

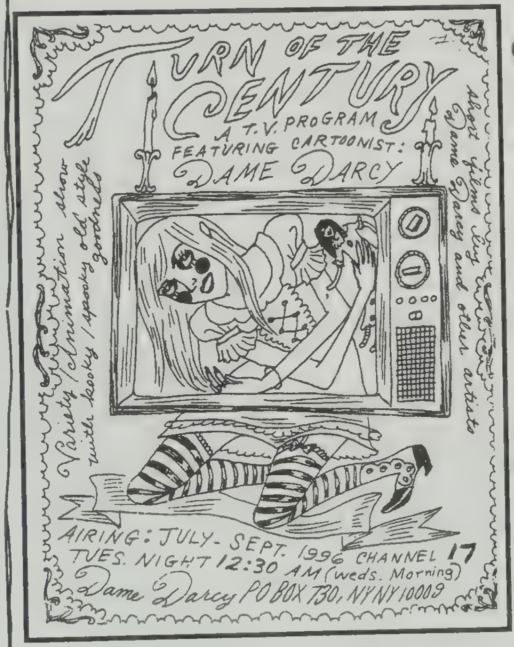
When I moved to Los Angeles. I started my sea shanty band, Aye Aye Captain, and I was playing sea shanties on the banjo, but it was kind of like rock music. Then that moved on to being just me and Skippy doing sea shanties. I met Skippy when he was nineteen. He wanted to do a dark wave band because he plays guitar, but he can also play keyboard, and I also, besides playing banjo, play bass. And even though I play banjo, and I really like old-school stuff and traditional ballads, I also really love old-school death rock and dark wave, or like new wave and a lot of synth stuff and all that. Devo and Siouxsie and the Banshees and The Cure.

It's so funny because these days you look like a corn-fed girl from the Midwest with your long blonde hair and—it sort of belies your gothic upbringing almost.

I know. It's funny. When I do shows and stuff, I definitely dress up, and I want to look glamorous and different and exciting or whatever, but I feel like there's two things. Los Angeles pushed me to the brink, where I was either going to become something else or kill myself. So, I became Buddhist, and when I became Buddhist, I realized that I don't have anything to prove anymore, and I don't have anything to prove to anybody and that I want to start being on the light side, and I want to start magnetizing positive things and positive energy and everything that I do to be for a positive reason and that I also have an endless supply of dementedness and darkness inside me and have been through that a lot, and that I don't really need to make it worse or try to work on that or look scary. And then, ultimately, if you look like a pretty, middle-aged white lady, and you just smile and have a squeaky clean face and a little coordinated purse and shoes and stuff, that you can walk into a lot more doors and get a lot more things, and then I can just turn around and hand that back to all of the minority Latino kids that I taught and to the environment and to feminism and to Tibet and to these things, these people, who need help.

How'd you get interested in Buddhism? How were you introduced to it?

I started to talk to a different bunch of witches that would reference ancient Buddhist philosophy a lot as the resource for a lot of ideas and theological stuff behind magic through the occult. Because the thing about paganism, Buddhism, Judaism and what Native Americans believe, it's all based on the same thing, which is a really, really ancient thing which goes even before the first testament and that if you're trying to tap into that and really understand that, then you know you're not really going to be part of a cult. The Catholic Church is a cult. Mormonism is clearly a cult.


TURN OF THE CENTURY
A T.V. PROGRAM
FEATURING CARTOONIST:
DAME DARCY
Variety/Animation show with kooky/spooky old style goodness
short films by Dame Darcy and other artists
AIRING: JULY-SEPT. 1996 CHANNEL 17
TUES. NIGHT 12:30 AM (weds. Morning)
Dame Darcy PO BOX 730, NY NY 10009

What makes something a cult?

Well, here's the checklist. Proselytizing makes something a cult. Trying to have a bunch of children to bring them into your religion is a cult. Paying to go to church and putting money into the church is part of a cult. Weird demented rituals are part of a cult. But then again, there's a lot of ritual in every religion. Even just getting up and washing your face and cleaning your house can be a ritual. Though that's not so weird and demented.

So, you're not eating the flesh and blood of a 2,000-year-old naked, dying man?
No. But what I liked about Buddhism is that nobody proselytized Buddhism to me. I had to really research and read all these books and read them over and over and over again so that I intellectually started to get the concepts of this philosophy, and then I started to really understand them in my heart, and then I started reprogramming my brain with them. And then the next step was just living that way and really understanding it and living that way. And then the next step after that was chanting and learning the chants and finding places to go where people did my type of Buddhism which is Nichiren Shoshu Japanese Buddhism. And it went on from there.

This is all stuff where I had to be really proactive and find it myself and study it myself and do it on my own. There was nobody knocking on my door trying to make me a Buddhist. Meanwhile, you go to the dang temple, and the monks are there, and they don't even speak English. They don't even look at you. And they just sit there chanting, and you have to sort of follow along, and they don't proselytize to you at all. You have to really do your homework. I really like that about it. Meanwhile, they never asked me for a single dime. Also there's nothing in it that says you have to suffer and give birth to children to propagate your religion, or that as a woman you're not capable of attaining Buddha-hood. We all are equal in doing that.

Pima Chodrin is one of my favorite Buddhist nuns, who originally was a white Canadian lady. So, when she talks about Buddhism, it's really funny because she can reference it to you like a Western person, and she often draws parallels to Alice in Wonderland, which is something I have, of course, been deeply influenced by.

[illegible]

Now, in reading Meat Cake throughout the years and seeing some of your other productions and your films, I hadn't noticed before an interest in the environment. Is this something that's sort of come up into your lexicon recently? Or is this something you've thought about throughout the years and is coming forth much stronger now?
Yeah, I think so. I've always been an environmentalist. I became a vegetarian as soon as I left Idaho; one of the main reasons is to help the environment. The other main reason is I'm against animal cruelty. You know, animals and children and all of us are all part of the environment.

I was raised in Idaho on a horse ranch, and it was like the most beautiful place in the world. Just incredibly beautiful. Like Ansel Adams goes to Idaho and takes photos of Idaho. That's what those are. I don't know if anybody's familiar with him, but his pictures of Idaho are really amazingly beautiful.

I think being from somewhere like that, you learn to love the land and love nature and love all these things, and you really get to know them, so that when you grow up and you live in a giant city like New York and you never see any of this stuff, you still know it exists, you feel very connected with it. Maybe in my books, when I was younger, I was working out this really dark crazy pathos I had or something, but now, I feel like I don't have to do that as much, but I have my style, and I'm applying it to environmentalism, but environmentalism that is fashionable and like punk rock and appeals to the MTV generation. You have to make it fun and trendy and fashionable, inspiring people to actually do something about it. If you just lecture them and scare them the way that Inconvenient Truth did, you'll definitely get the message out there, but then everybody feels so overwhelmed by it that they don't even know where to start. Well, I've got some suggestions of where to start. Becoming a vegetarian is a great way to start. Not having kids is another. I'm not going to do either one of those things. I don't eat meat, and I'm not going to have children. I want to adopt children if and when I ever want to have them because it's not harming the environment to already take care of the people that are here already.

You've also written a play.
Yes, Meat Cake the play was produced in Boston, MA in Spring 2000 by an independent theater company called Envy Productions.

What were some of the themes of the play? Pretty much like the comic book? Richard Dirt was involved?
Yeah, it was the same as the book. It had Wax Wolf, the werewolf guy, and the Siamese Twins, the Mermaid. They got hypnotized by Wax Wolf and a ring was stolen, and they got pushed in the lake. And they unburied some dead zombie guy. All kinds of wacky stuff. It toured on the East Coast, and we're selling it now as a DVD, but we're going to start doing downloads of that too.

How did you get involved in the Tori Amos book project?
Tori Amos likes fairies, and they were looking for cartoonists to be involved in this project, She touches upon fairies and mermaids and all that stuff a lot in her music. And she's a female musician. I guess they thought of me because it makes sense that we could collaborate like that. They contacted me and I drew a cartoon about a mermaid.

Was it based on one of her songs, the lyrics to one of her songs?
Yeah, it was based on Pandora's Aquarium.

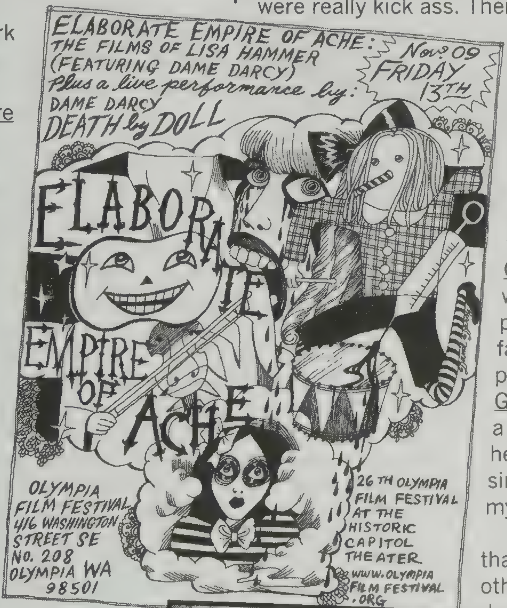
Did you get to choose the song?
Yeah. There were a couple of different ones that I looked at, but I liked the one about the mermaid the best because it also had like the Catholic school in it. What's funny about being raised Catholic is that it primes you for being Gothic. I just kind of really didn't like a lot of the Catholicism, and it really freaks me out thinking about it and how I'd been brainwashed in a weird way. But at the same time, my mom's like a really cute Catholic, Christian lady, and

Main image: [illegible] for a night of cabaret. Photo [illegible]
Inset: Sister dolls Blanca and Blanche White. Made for Hasbro and [illegible]
artist-created My Little Pony show at New York's M[illegible]

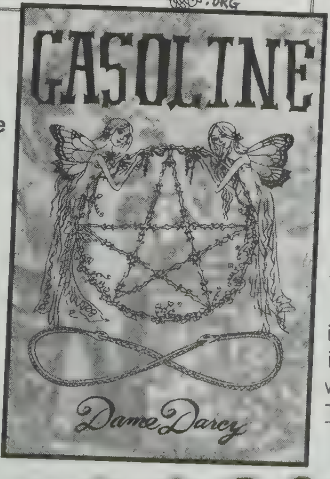
her version of it is really cute and I think really helps her a lot. And the whole Mother Mary worshipping thing, I really dig that.

I'm not really that freaked out by Catholicism anymore now either because it doesn't affect me; I don't care. I'm too Buddhist to be freaked out by it now.

Did Gasoline begin as a screenplay or as a graphic novel?
It began as a manuscript for the graphic novel. I have a literary agent based in New York who shopped Gasoline around and got me a gig illustrating Jane Eyre for Putnam Penguin in 06. And then they were shopping it some more, and while they were shopping it, I was making the manuscript into the screenplay and working to develop the screenplay before I got the book deal. Then I got the book deal for Gasoline with Merrill Books, and now it's coming out as a graphic novel, but the screenplay is written, and I have a demo with a live-action scene and some animation.


ELABORATE EMPIRE OF ACHE:
THE FILMS OF LISA HAMMER
(FEATURING DAME DARCY)
Plus a live performance by:
DAME DARCY
DEATH by DOLL
Nov 09
FRIDAY
13TH
ELABORATE EMPIRE OF ACHE
OLYMPIA FILM FESTIVAL
416 WASHINGTON STREET SE
NO. 208
OLYMPIA WA
98501
26TH OLYMPIA FILM FESTIVAL
AT THE HISTORIC CAPITOL THEATER
WWW.OLYMPIA FILM FESTIVAL.ORG

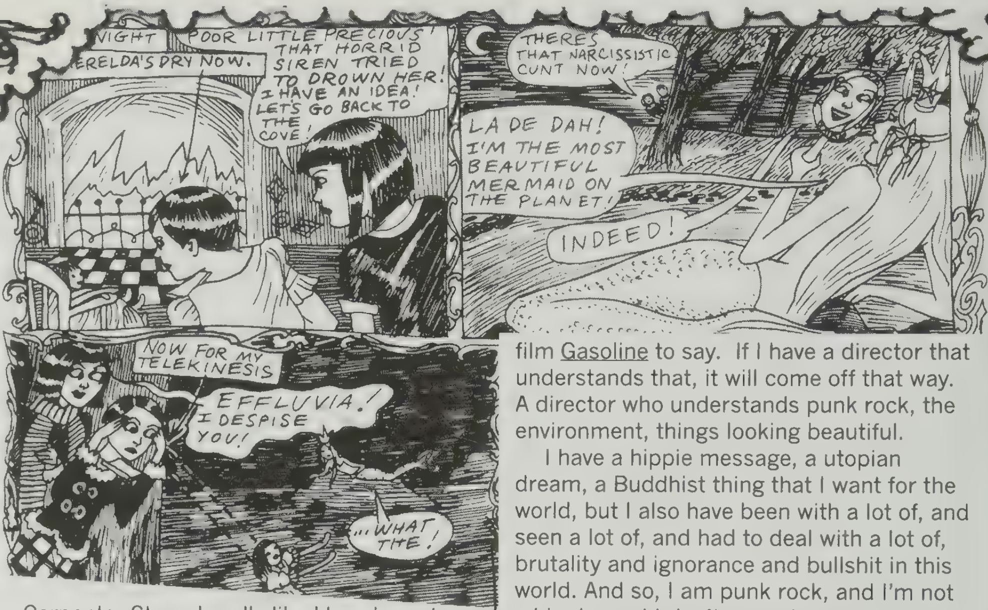
Are you mostly interested in having your screenplay directed by someone else? Or do you want to be involved?
I want Gasoline to be directed by Todd Haynes, number one. I gave him the pitch and the mock-up of the book, and he seemed to like the look of it. He said that he's inbetween projects right now, but he's looking for something new.


GASOLINE
Dame Darcy

I like Todd Haynes' movies, but they seem more down to earth than something like Gasoline. Gasoline seems pretty fantastic, with bits of animation in it.
It is.

It's the story of a pretty strange family. Why do you feel that Todd Haynes would be such a good person for your film?
I saw his weird art movies from when he first started. I've been following his career before Poison, before he even had his first feature film. I saw his crazy art films. I thought they were really kick ass. Then I saw Poison, and what he did with Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story was really dolliciously good and weird. I really loved Velvet Goldmine. I love the way that Velvet Goldmine looks, with its stylized punk rock glamorous fairytale. That's pretty applicable to Gasoline because it's a rock opera. And he'd understand the sincere campiness of my movie.

The other thing is that when he did the other movies from before he had his first feature film, he did something that looked like David and Goliath made out of clay, but it was these weird fabricated characters like Gumby and David and Goliath. But live action. And then he did the live action animation—but it wasn't animated; it was just playing with Barbies, in The Karen


NIGHT
ERELDA'S DRY NOW.
POOR LITTLE PRECIOUS! THAT HORRID SIREN TRIED TO DROWN HER! I HAVE AN IDEA! LET'S GO BACK TO THE COVE!
THERES THAT NARCISSISTIC CUNT NOW!
LA DE DAH! I'M THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MERMAID ON THE PLANET!
INDEED!
NOW FOR MY TELEKINESIS
EFFLUVIA! I DESPISE YOU!
...WHAT THE!

Carpenter Story. I really liked how he put all that stuff together and pulled it off even though he was clearly using super-low-budget ways to do stuff.

It did have a lot of fantasy elements in it and I think that his taste in music is similar to mine. And his idea of really delivering hardcore messages through romanticism is like mine. I really would like to work with a gay director, particularly because I think that my movie would be handled correctly because in my book, Gasoline, there's a love affair between the youngest Armbuster, who's the witch family guy, and a teenage girl. I did it this way because my writing coach told me if I did it this way then it could be marketed like Harry Potter. Even though it's more adult than Harry Potter, it could still appeal to teens but would be adult and would be like something that I could write a sequel to.

But originally, the nihilist character who comes into the family is gay, or bi, and he makes out with the baby brother, who seems to be also bi, and the sister. And I think that that's hot. I think it's great. I think guys that empower themselves and also accept a more intuitive side are free from society's stupid boxes everybody puts you in.

That was what I want my feature film Gasoline to say. If I have a director that understands that, it will come off that way. A director who understands punk rock, the environment, things looking beautiful.

I have a hippie message, a utopian dream, a Buddhist thing that I want for the world, but I also have been with a lot of, and seen a lot of, and had to deal with a lot of, brutality and ignorance and bullshit in this world. And so, I am punk rock, and I'm not a hippie, and I don't want things to all be like, "Love and peace, man," because that doesn't get us anywhere. Clearly, where did that get us? In this mess we're in now. I think we have to toughen up a little bit.

He's at the top of my list of directors that I'd like to have do this. And I think that as far as the animation stuff goes, I want to be the art director, and I can do animation. I want to work with the animation crew and put that together and design the costumes and sets.

It seems you would think of a director like Guy Maddin as a director for your film.
I did, and I love Guy. I've been in touch with him since Careful came out in 93, and he's really nice and supportive to me, but I asked him about Gasoline—he was the first person I asked —and he didn't seem to be able to want to deal with an outside movie. He wants to direct his own movies only.

All his movies seem fairly personal. In fact, his most recent film is called My Winnipeg.
Yeah, I don't know if he directs movies written by other people.

But his style seems closest.
Oh, his style's perfect, and I love Guy, and I've always wanted to

Above art from Meat Cake #6. Next page: Voodoo ritual from Gasoline, 2008.

work with Guy too. He referred me to his cinematographer, who is very supportive. But what it really comes down to is I really need a dependable producer. I just really need a real producer that's just going to handle it in a professional way.

So, is Meat Cake an annual publication? It comes out once a year?
Well, it's supposed to come out three times a year, but I try to make it come out twice a year.

You've been publishing it for fifteen years, and you're on number seventeen.
I'm on seventeen, but it's really number twenty.

Because of the original three?
Yeah. And I'm doing graphic novels now too. I had Frightful Fairytales come out in 02 and then my Meat Cake compilation came out in 03. And then, Jane Eyre came out in 06 and Gasoline in 08. And then we're working on getting The Exorsisters out.

What is The Exorsisters about?
Four hot witches who are budding rock stars. Four very different teenage girls who are also four great friends. I came up with the idea because over a two-year period one of my best friends died from drug overdose at the age of twenty-eight; also a girl whom was a recent friend but had been a longtime fan of mine died of an overdose at the age of twenty-three, and my wonderful friend who was my assistant from the time she was seventeen and did some really amazing art design and music died from a head-on car accident at the age of twenty.

These truly beautiful, unique, and creative girls maybe would have not gone down such a dark path if they had had a self-help book, but in comics form, so teens don't knock it because it's self-help, a guide that urged them to express their problems in a less self-destructive way. Maybe if they learned some kind of philosophical support and stress management they would have not got into the hard drugs that later killed them.

I am a hardcore feminist, and whatever is too harsh for this young adult title I intend to put in the Handbook for Hot Witches, which is also called, "a field guide for the deflowered," and is a girl's guide to the Apocalypse, which talks about how hormones from factory farm meat affect women, about how to cure a yeast infection with plain yogurt and other gynecological tips with herbs that will still be available after the Apocalypse when the drug companies fail us. Spells for everything under the sun and moon, lots of crafting tips, and how to lure men. How to cook without fire, how to purify water and turn salt water drinkable. The quickening and how it is bringing the people of Atlantis back and what to do once they are here and how to identify them and if you are one of them. You know, the usual.

Is there anything else you feel that people reading about you need to know?
Well, the Apocalypse is coming, everybody, and it's a great time to really think about being witches, not bitches.

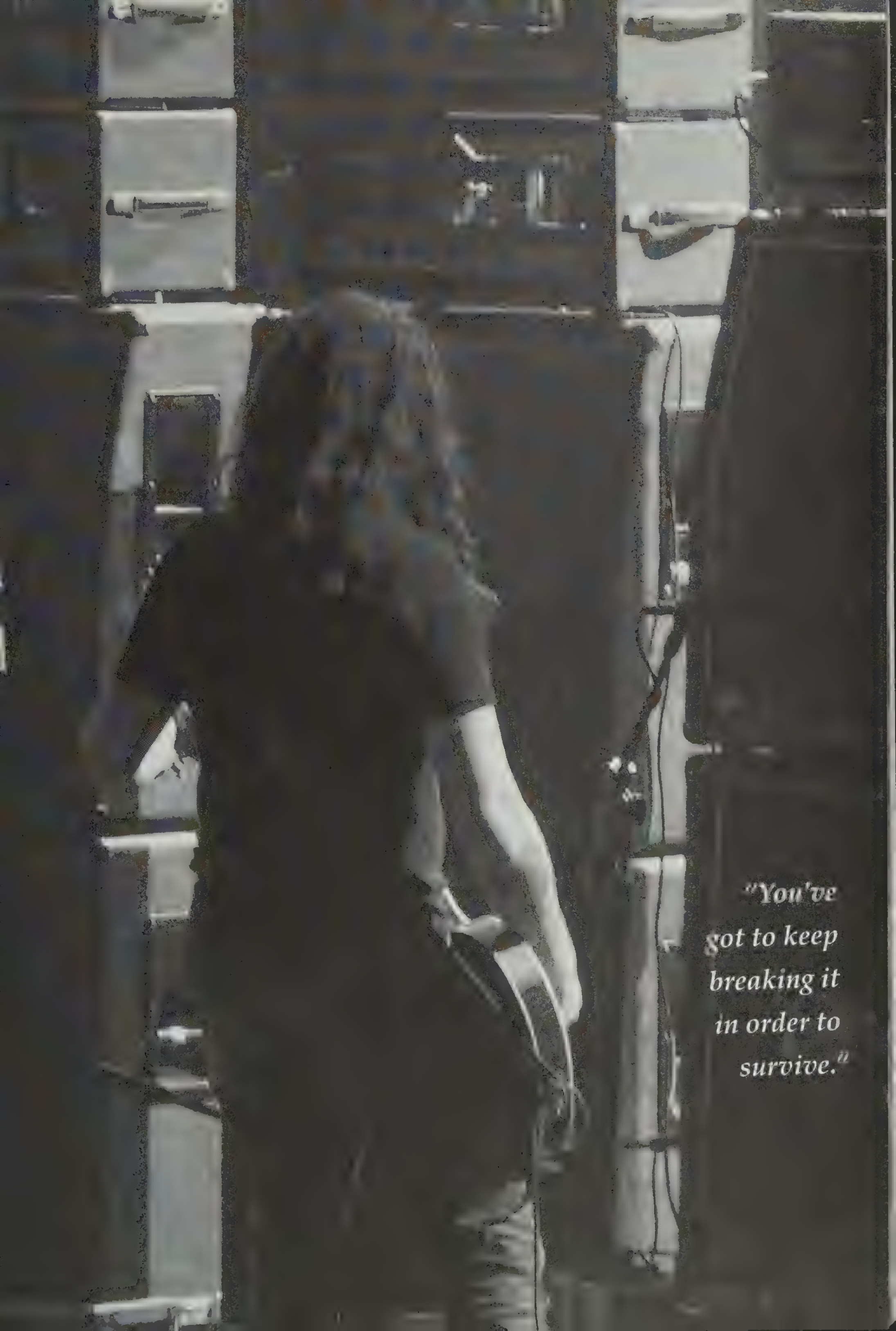
Being witches, not bitches?
Witches are going to rock now, and bitches are going to go down. Meanwhile, think about what team you want to be on. And don't forget to go to DameDarcy.com for all your Dame Darcy needs.

STEPHEN O'MALLEY

sunn O)))
MONOLITHS
& DIMENSIONS

Sunn O))) first appeared to me as a possible typo, then through a link on a Boris page. My first album, ØØ Void, sent the room shattering with the heaviest vibrations I had ever known outside of walking through my friend Dale Travous' dual 5 Mhz speaker setup. Sunn O))) quickly moved up to the top of the list of my favorite things on the planet.

I first met the human genome known as Stephen O'Malley after the October 2008 Knitting Factory show in New York, the sidewalk populated with various Sunn O))) friends from superproducer Randall Dunn to designer Seldon Hunt and grand jazz daddy Greg Anderson. Meeting on Seattle's Queen Anne hill, the city of both our teenage years, led to this nontechnical discussion of O'Malley's work here and in the world. Sunn O))) is good food.



"You've got to keep breaking it in order to survive."

SHADE RUPE: You're from Seattle, right? Were you born here?
STEPHEN O'MALLEY: I wasn't born here, but I grew up here.

Where were you from originally?
I was born in New Hampshire.

How did you get out to Seattle?
My parents moved out here. My mother's family is from here. They were hippies. And it's hard to raise a kid in the woods, you know? It was easier for them to come out here. I don't think they wanted to be so remote anymore, away from their families. All of my father's family is on the West Coast too, for the most part. So we came out here. I was so young that I don't even remember New Hampshire, so I grew up here. I was like three or something.

I'm glad I grew up in Seattle. It's kind of a depressing kind of place with the grey sky and all, so there's a lot of Goth and dark stuff and it was awesome growing up here.
I loved it. There was always something about it. Even if the outside music didn't really get in so much back when I was growing up, still there was a lot of creativity and music going on. Maybe that's the same everywhere, but I don't know if it is, actually. I've talked to people who've grown up from then and said "there was fucking nothing going on..." We might say there was nothing going on, but at least there was local stuff going on. I mean, there was Anomalous Records, and you were doing your thing... There was Om. There was Fallout.

Cover of the Sunn O))) album Oracle featuring an installation by Banks Violette.

Now, is Om in Portland now? I know Emil Amos is with Grails and Holy Sons, and that's pretty much Portland-based. He's drumming for Om. I just saw them like a month ago.
You saw Om?

Thankfully. Om was up at ATP and threw in a Brooklyn show. So is Om Portland-based now?
Al Cisneros lives in Santa Barbara or something like that. Emil, I don't know where he lives. He might even live in California now, I don't know. It's possible. We played together last month, but I didn't really talk to him about it. Grails is Portland-based.

Yeah, and they just played with you guys in October, at the Barbati's Pan event.
Exactly.

It's bummin' cause they rarely play in Portland, and now I'm here in the northwest and they're in New York this week doing two shows.
They're rolling right now it seems like.

It's much more artist-based out here. If you're in New York, you're in a city. You're just constantly thinking,"I've got to get this out there, and people have to know what I'm doing."
Survival instinct.

"I need people to come to my show..."
It's way more heavy.

In New York, the phone rings at 10:00 at night and it's an ad agency and they're like "Hey, could you come in at midnight?" So your whole life revolves around whoever is calling, to go earn money. So if you're working on something personal, it's over. At the moment, I'd rather be poor... [laughs]
Dude, I lived in New York for eight years. I did the ad agency thing. I was like a senior art director at some place for a bunch of

STEPHEN O'MALLEY

Greg Anderson and Stephen tuning in to tune out. Photo Kerry O'Sullivan.

years and made pretty good money at the time. I don't make very much now but I'm able to do so much more. But I'm really glad I did that because I kind of set a foundation...

My cover artist Howard Forbes runs Unknown Graphic Services. He moved to Portland in August, and he told me, "You know, I've made more art in two weeks than I did in five years in New York."
Yeah, you actually have weekends or something like that.

What kind of music were you finding as a teenager out here? What were you gravitating to?
Early on I met some guys in high school... Well I was really into metal even when I was like eleven I guess. Then in high school I got into hardcore. There were no metalheads in my high school—it was the late 80s, it was over. At least in north Seattle, where I grew up. The metalheads were kind of early 80s. I was super into it, but the only people I met at that time were into hardcore punk, so I went to tons of hardcore shows here.

What was going on with Metallica in 89?
The Black Album was about to come out. It was their worst... I mean, from an underground point of view...

Yeah, they were pretty MTV by then. So it wasn't cool.
I was going totally the other way. I got really into death metal when I was a teenager. Like super into it... and followed that. That was kind of my introduction to the international underground and tape trading and realizing you could actually communicate with musicians that you thought about. I formed a fanzine, Descent, and all that kind of stuff. I did five issues. It was pretty good, actually.

We did that zine Fall of Angels for a while, too. As I got a little bit older, late teens, early twenties, I started getting more open-minded. I discovered things like power electronics through black metal. And then stuff like Blood Axis and that led to World Serpent and all that stuff.

So you got into power electronics through black metal?
Kind of. Just because I was looking for more extreme stuff. More abstract.

Okay, it wasn't from black metal music... Because black metal is usually speed guitar and grumbled voice...
Yeah, but in the early 90s there was like a different ideology going on where it was... I don't know, the thing about black metal that was different than other kinds, like death

metal or thrash or anything is it's not so critical with the technique. It's more about the results, it's more abstract. I think there was a cross-over with a few bands. There was a band from Sweden called MZ412 that came out. And that introduced me to Cold Meat Industry, which was like this entry-level electronics label for metalheads at the time. They put out a Mortiis record. Mortiis was in this band Emperors. It's funny these little trails, you know? But then I discovered Merzbow and stuff. When Merzbow actually played here, I was like, fuck. You know, at that time.

Were you making music by then?
Uh... almost. Well, yeah, I was. I started bands in 93, me and [Greg] Anderson had started this band Thorr's Hammer.

Which was a killer act. I've always wondered how you pronounce the album title. Dommedagsnatt?
'Dohm Dogs Not' It's actually 'dome,' like Dømkirke, that new Sunn O))) album, it's the same...

And Dømkirke? Does 'kirke' mean church?
'Dome cheuka' is the way it's pronounced. 'Døm' with the 'o' with the line through it means judgment. But 'dom' without the line means dome, like cathedral dome. So it's a word play. But 'dommedag' actually means doomsday. Doomsday's night. It's the Norwegian end of the world cycle.

How do you pronounce your singer's name on the album? Runhild Gammelsaeter.
'Roonhild Gamilsaytur.'

Yeah, I look at that and I try to imagine how to say it and I know I'm fucking up.
Exactly.

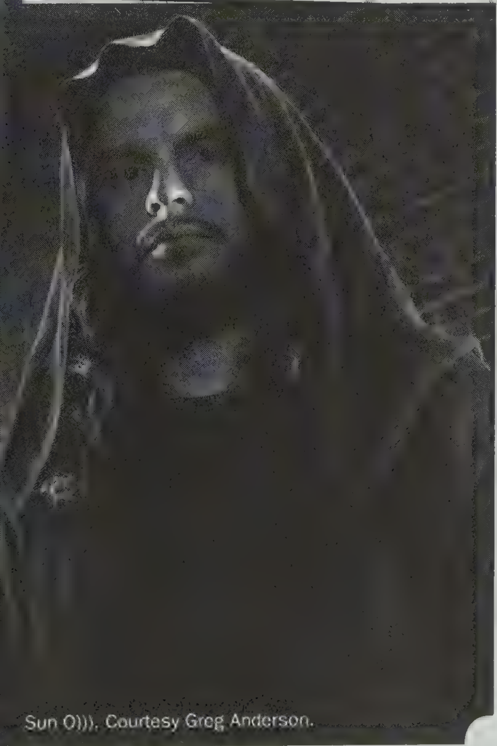
How did you and Greg Anderson hook up?
I met him in the hardcore scene. He was in bands. We actually grew up in the same neighborhood, went to the same high school and all that. But he was four or five years older than me, so we never actually knew each other at that time. But he was playing in bands, and some of my friends were friends with guys in those bands. I just met him that way.

He discovered Entombed at some point. And he had this band called Engine Kid at the time, which was kind of this heavy rock band, inspired by Slint. They were like Slint meets the Melvins or something. Then he discovered Entombed's Wolverine Blues. And he got an interest and was like, "Who do I know who knows anything about Swedish death metal?" And it was me. And we ran into each other at some record stores right over here on Queen Anne probably. And started talking and ended up playing, getting together in his mom's basement or something, playing some cheap riffs.

I met Runhild at the same time. She was this nineteen-year-old blonde Norwegian girl and was very interested. She was super into death metal, so we just started this band. Found this English drummer guy who was a freak. It was cool. But that band was just around for only six months or something. We played some shows, even. People were like "what the fuck is up with this?" There were some death metal bands at the time, but they were so cheesy. It was like Mountlake

Terrace dudes who think they're super into the Kaballah and think they're these great sages, but they're twenty-year-old scumbags. Which a lot of people are. You know, that's not disqualifying, but in this case it's pretty stupid. You know what I mean?

Oh sure. There was something very different about Thorr's Hammer, you know? When she's doing the low grumbly "grrrr" growl you don't know it's a chick. And then when she starts singing, it's like "what the fuck, is this somebody else?" It's noticeable that something different is happening with that album.



Sun O))). Courtesy Greg Anderson.

Also you guys didn't go the usual black metal route. I never found a lot of the black metal stuff so menacing because I couldn't read what the fucking name of the band was... I'd try to read all this melting scrawling stuff, [mumbly sounds], I'm like, "well, okay."

This friend of mine, he was the singer of that band Scream, this guy Pete Stahl. He's older than me, he's in his late forties. I met him around then and he'd be wearing a shirt with an Embryonic Hammer Death logo or something. I'd have to say, "Hey man, you've got something on your shirt, a bird shit on ya or something!"

Yeah, that band, it was something else. Because Runhild and I really hit it off. I had a real interest in Norwegian mythology and history at the time, and still do. I think a lot of those metaphors are really interesting, the way they were manipulated, as Norway and Sweden were sort of entering the European cultural scene with Christianity and stuff.

So, do those runes actually mean something then? You weren't just being archaic?
Yeah, that stuff says 'truth in the blood' in Norwegian.

A lot of people just get into all sorts of imagery, you know Satanic imagery, just to use it.
Yeah, I did the same thing.

Yeah, we all did. To make it scary. But to actually have the knowledge and understanding is pretty cool.
Well that's the thing. I mean, she was Norwegian. That doesn't necessarily mean you know how to write runes, but she was smart. She's intelligent. Now she's a biochemist researcher.

Was the only reason that ended because she went away to school?
Well, yeah. She moved. She was transferring college, and moved to Oslo. For obvious reasons. Mainly they had a better program for what she was doing and she's Norwegian so it's covered by the state. It's a big difference. [laughs]

It was cool, it had its time and it was good. And it also laid the seeds for me and Anderson to start Burning Witch later that year with the same drummer. And that was a real progression. Thorr's Hammer was kind of like, "Okay, let's try it out." In retrospect that's what it was. It was really important. That was the seed for basically everything. Greg and I are still playing together, it's been over fifteen years. That's amazing. That's a long time to collaborate with someone about anything, much less music.

Yeah, people usually get pissed at each other or OD or just fuck up.

Get the rock dream, like "I'm going to become super famous" and that just kills everything off because it's totally unrealistic.

I worked on a Type O Negative video in 93, and I was looking at these guys and you could just tell. I mean like [in ominous voice] "black number one." It was like this total pop song. And then he was in Playgirl.

That's funny, yeah. He should be. But it's interesting, because the seeds for all of this stuff that's happened, at least in my world, a lot of it, it's here. And in the past few years we've been coming back here to record our Sunn O))) records and discovering all of these amazing musicians who are open-minded and interesting. [illegible] our new record [illegible] all of the talent on [illegible] [illegible]. All of these classical musicians, incredible improvisers.

Stebmo?

Yeah, Stebmo of course. He's been in the field for a long time. When Earth started going again we were friends with them, of course, and realized they were working with Randall Dunn. Randall's totally instrumental in that he's been working here as an engineer for years and years. A producer and engineer. He knows so many people. He kind of brought these people into Earth. You know, like Steve, Stebmo, Don, Milky, these guys.

There's a lot of people that came in on Altar based on Randall. He was like, "yeah, I know this guy and this guy and this guy." Eventually led to us working with Eyvind Kang on this new record. And then Eyvind knows all these classical contemporary [illegible] who all came out. I'm super impressed. This is the first time we've been to Seattle where I've actually thought, in a long time, "yeah, I could live here again." [illegible] Magnolia. And Queen Anne [illegible] still. Ballard is [illegible]

SUNNO))) AND BORIS PRESENT
ALTAR
BXI

Banks Violette, 2007. Installation view, Gladstone Gallery. Courtesy Team Gallery, Gladstone Gallery, and the artist. Inset: Flyer from Sunn O))) and Boris performing Altar at the Brooklyn Masonic Temple, Sept. 7, 2010.

What are your main reasons for putting out vinyl records? I know there's this whole audio fidelity, but is it the object?
Yeah, it's an object. It's still a product or whatever, of course. I always use the analogy "It's the hardcover book vs. the softcover." Or the download. You know? The people I work with, everyone loves LPs, so what better presentation for audio? And you can elaborate on it. You can make it a book. I put out a book recently, an art gallery book from a Banks Violette show, with an LP slipcased in the back.

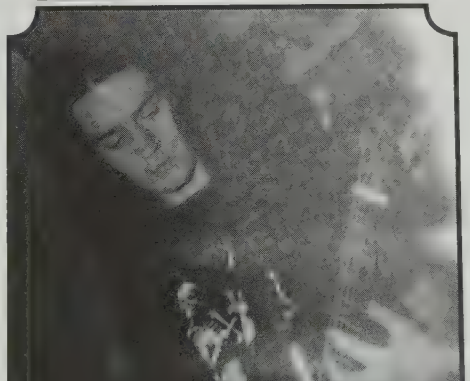
I love stuff like that, but it's hard to store art objects in a small Manhattan apartment.
Yeah, it's a double-edged sword. I talked to my producers about this, and my engineers I work with here. And everyone is like, "man, it's fucking awesome to shed the material thing as much as possible." And the older you get, too, the less you need all this stuff. You read a book and then you give it to someone or whatever. Or borrow it from the library even.

CDs too. I moved to Paris kind of quickly, the transition was kind of quick and a little bit unexpected. I was actually moving to New York and it fell through. But the next week I had to go to France to work. And then by the time I was there for a month and something popped up there that I could stay there, but in the meantime I put my stuff in storage temporarily and then two years later...

All that money. Like two grand. For storage [laughs].
Yeah. And I think of, like, fuck, I have so much... my libraries are in there basically. My audio library, my art library, my books... I don't care about any of my furniture or anything anymore, but it's like... I can see the point, you know. I could have just put that on a hard drive—like this big—everything.

But then it turns into a file. You know suddenly these ideas become computer files. And that's a whole other thing too. They're files, they're not... It's transforming it into something that's never going to be what it was meant to be. It didn't start that way, as a file, you know? It started as someone composing, making an idea or whatever, in the most organic way possible, with their

Stephen with KTL.


Early years. Photos courtesy Stephen O'Malley.

brain. And then it turns into a file? That's another side to it. It's like music. I'd rather just keep it live, get rid of files and just make it live performance.

It's interesting about that. I have quite a bit of Sunn O))). I have all three of the Belles. I've got Blue, White, and Black. It takes a while to find this shit. Because somebody's got the Japanese-only third disc with the bonus track that's not on any other disc. You gotta find this shit sometimes. You do, though.

Yeah, that's what we do.

It's special.

Yeah, people get really cynical about it, as marketing. Like, "how do you sell the same record to the same people five times?" But it's... that's part of it, of course. You gotta survive. But on the other hand, that's what we do anyway.

Oh, people love to do that.
I mean, fucking Nurse with Wound? His stuff used to be impossible to find.

Had you guys met before your show in Dublin last month? Or was this your first show with him?
This was my first show with him. We met a few times, just recently though.

Nurse with Wound back in the 80s was really weird. That was really arcane weird shit. He would do 500 copies only of these albums. There was something really cool and out there with Nurse with Wound because you didn't really know what he looked like, you didn't know where it was coming from.
That's the thing. You know, when I played with him, I was hanging out with Matthew from irr. app. (ext.). First time I met him, totally cool guy. When I was seventeen I tape-traded Nurse with Wound stuff with my friends. I didn't even know if this was a person or a band or whatever. And then, when it finally comes around, it's Steven Stapleton. The guy's amazing. He's been living in Ireland on a farm for the last thirty years. Having a family and stuff. Being a carpenter or whatever. He's an artist. He just kind of retreated. But he was telling me, "Yeah, I decided to start doing shows." Isn't it amazing? He's in his fifties and he's got a whole music career in front of him.

He's doing a DJ set at the Brainwashed Brainwaves festival in Boston this month. Peter Christopherson is there. Foetus is doing Manorexia. Whitehouse would've been nice but...
We played with them with KTL. There was a megafestival thing in Vienna, at the Rhiz. Peter Rehburg put it on. It was three nights, KTL played one night with Marcus Schmickler. One night was Haswell Hecker and Whitehouse. And then it was Angel and Benny Nelson. They were gonna play Norts in France, and that was it. You know, they're done. But who knows? How many times have they broken up? They're one of those bands that disappears and then reemerges.

Were you here when Anomalous put on The Fire Walking and Decapitation Seminar?

I moved in 92 and that was 95.
That's the first time I saw Merzbow.

Cool, We had him at Incubator in 91 or 92.
You had him at your place, yeah. He came three years in a row. The second one was with a bigger band. With a singer and that chick, Masami's wife or whatever, maybe? It was a trio. Then the next year he came with Masonna.

Yeah, I saw that show when they were in New York. That was really cool. That was great to see him again, it was really fun.
That was good. But when they were here, it was like, "What, him?!" Wow! That's fortunate, you know.

I've noticed Earth is around Olympia, and Jesse Sykes is in Seattle, and Grails is from Portland. And I see that Randall Dunn is producing all this stuff. Is there something going on in Seattle, or is this just happening and people are making music at the same time? I'd hate for any music news reporting media to all of a sudden start fucking it again, but...
Well, I think there's some difference. There's a few people who are 'rock dream' in the scene right now here. But everyone is older and they're more down to earth, and they've already gone through it. Almost everyone. Like Jesse Sykes and stuff, like the people in that band. Phil from that band, he was in Whiskey Town, which was on A&M or something. And then, you know, Dylan of course has already been through that. He has no interest in 'rock dream.' They're psyched they can go to Europe twice a year to tour. It's like fucking awesome.

Earth had those years where everybody was like "what the fuck, what are you up to? Are you just shooting up all the time you know?"
It came back to the music. It came back to being a guitar player.

Randall Dunn seems pretty instrumental in the shaping of things.
Definitely with Earth.

The sounds are definitely changing now. Randall's production makes the music more

Banks Violette, 2006. Sunn O))) / (Repeater) Decay / Coma Mirror. Salt, resin, steel, hardware, plywood, paint, fiberglass, tinted epoxy dimensions variable.. Courtesy Team Gallery, NY, Maureen Paley, London, and the artist. Inset: Stephen in Brussells. Courtesy Stephen O'Malley.

of a soundscape. And it's funny, you were talking about Sunn O))) live, is really, that's it, that's what it is. The records are fucking awesome, I love having the music, I love playing it. But a live Sunn O))) record, it just feels kind of lost. Sunn O))) live is exactly that, it's an experience, not a recording.
Well, Sunn O))) is interesting because—this is the only time this has happened in any band I've been in—it's complex enough that it has all these different facets, all these different versions. One is the live. Of course, for me that's the reality. But the albums are also this whole valid platform that we can pull a lot of experimentation out of. We have all of this other space to really try out new things and compose things differently. Then there's another huge facet which we haven't explored yet, which will be the visual side, like with video.

Khanate was another growth. And a lot of people, even inside metal, just find it really hard to listen to.
Khanate was super influenced by being in Manhattan. That's about tension and release. Or just craving release and it never arriving. That was the most mathematical thing, too. Everything was totally composed.

Like the architecture of the city informing the construction of the music.
There's an architectural element to the music for sure. The framework of this music. Now that I've had a few years away from it—and also from New York—to put things in retrospect, the clarity and the relationship of what was actually going on is interesting. Khanate was so about that, that stress, and that energy that's in New York that's so addictive and cool. But just that stress. That sort of stress not to get caught in like a solidifying framework. You've got to keep breaking it in order to survive. Because once you get caught, you're going to get stuck.

Yeah, that's the phrase, "slave of New York." Sunn O))) helps. It's so meditative.
A lot of stuff happened while I was living in New York, with Sunn O))). My wife at that time, her parents had this cool house up in the countryside in Massachusetts—and we'd go up there for four days or something. You know how it is... Like three days later you finally start decompressing. And then the fourth day you're like "oh, wow."

You can feel it.
And then you're back into it immediately.

As soon as you're out of your car.
Sunn O))) became this super-concentrated way of getting there quicker. Getting to this trance.

Where were you, and where was Greg, at the time that Sunn O))) decided to be? Were you already playing with sounds that would become Sunn O)))?
I think Burning Witch has some references. Greg actually was in Burning Witch but he left before we really did anything and he moved to L.A. And about a year later I moved to England, and that's when Burning Witch stopped. So we didn't play music for like two years. But I ended up moving to L.A. after this England jaunt, and we were like, "let's jam." I hate that word, but that's how it started. Greg had got all these amps and he was in this band called Goatsnake, sharing a rehearsal space with the Melvins.

So, fuck, "let's just play guitar, man, let's just go in there, get fucking high, and play guitar." That's what we did. Then we were like, "cool, let's do it again." "This is great, what do you want to do?" "Should we flesh it out?" "Let's play a show! Let's play a show at The Garage in Silverlake or whatever." There were maybe five people there. We were wearing capes, spitting blood, had a wall of amps. Just shit, though, at the time. Well, not all of it was shit. That really became the foundation. And we thought, "you know what, this is fucking cool. We love Earth, we love the Melvins, let's make some heavy riffs."

We were into down-tuning at the time. That became the real core. Which we finally went back to last month with that Grimmrobes tour. And it couldn't be more different from the beginning, musically. It's actually incredible how musical it is at the foundation. We haven't had a chance to really explore that in years. Just the two guitars. I was like, "has my hearing changed?" My hearing has gotten bad, but, has my sense of harmony and melody and stuff changed? Because it's all right there, man. It doesn't matter, any of the other musicians, vocalists, whatever we had over the years, it's all right there with just guitar.

Well I would think you probably feel it also, right? Even beyond hearing, and hearing how the sounds are coming out. You feel it coming through.
Absolutely. When I say 'hearing,' hearing for me is not just audio. It's not just ears, it's physical. It's just some of the waves happen to trigger your nerves in your eardrum. It's sensation.

It was great at the Knitting Factory show. People were freaked because at the end Greg started doing an almost traditional playing style. His hair was flailing around, the hood's off... Everyone was like "YEAH!!" with their hands like total curled claws in the air.
I couldn't believe the audience! [laughs]

Isn't that amazing? For some reason that sound, which is supposed to conjure images of demons and make you feel like Satan is reaching up through your soul... At least it works that way for me. [laughs]
Well, that's it! That's the thing. It's very subjective, actually. It's not supposed to be the same for everybody.

Everybody was definitely having their own reactions. Everyone was making these arrrrghghghg sounds. Every time one of you would stretch out a hand and hold it up everyone would go irrrrrrr. Like everyone became Orcs or something.

Stephen O'Malley, feeling it, 1994.

That's hilarious. It's awesome. For me it's not evil at all, it's pleasure. It's super-pleasure, actually. It's not darkness or evil or whatever.

Oh, yeah. Well, that's what's funny about Satanism...
That's pleasure, too.

Ultimately... It's not even anti-god or anything. It's just like... pleasure. At least Anton LaVey's version of it, was just "live and enjoy your life."
Sure, a lot of people, Crowley, the OTO, that seems to be a pleasure-based organization.

Yeah, "do what thou wilt." Yeah, absolutely. So, that feeling totally comes out...
I think that's more like the primal thing. With the music. It's certainly going into the past. Or bleeding outside from the present.

From top: Stephen hits the low notes with his project with Peter Rehberg, KTL. Courtesy Stephen O'Malley. And Stephen, NW style. Photo Kerry O'Sullivan.

at least. And it brings that sensation. It's happening. At least for me it's always been that way. When that's happening and it's on, it's transcendent of time. And I guess that was working with the audience there. [laughs]

Well you know for something that at first listen almost sounds minimal...
It is.

It is... and it is. But, the way you work with these sounds and vibrations and what you're playing against. I mean... How do you say ØØ Void?
Double-oh void.

Double-oh void. Each of those tracks is very different from each other. And you start incorporating different sounds, too. And it's also really interesting too, like Black One has all that going on. And White1—the two Whites—are almost lighter. You know, which is sort of funny. And you've got My Wall, which has vocals that you can actually hear.
That's the first time we got lyrical, actually.

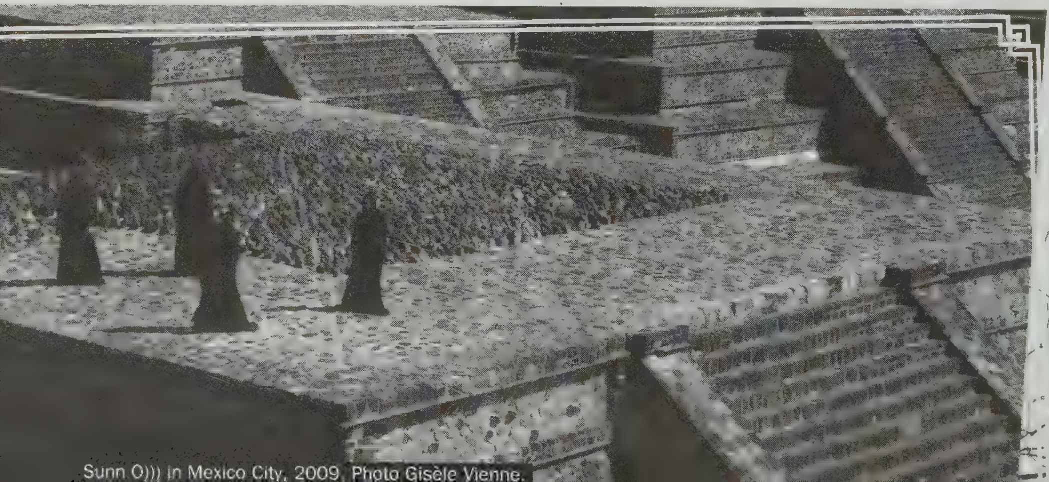
...and then the woman's voice on the next track.
That's Runhild.

You're working with this completely heavy sound and turning it into these pieces. Sometimes I'm listening to it and I feel like I'm in an open field with little white doves flying around.
It's sculptural. And it's very subjective. It's that whole thing. 'Minimalist' and 'minimalism' are such funny terms, because the music often labeled as such is often quite maximalist, as far as listening experience goes. It requires pretty heavy concentration and dedication to the listening experience.

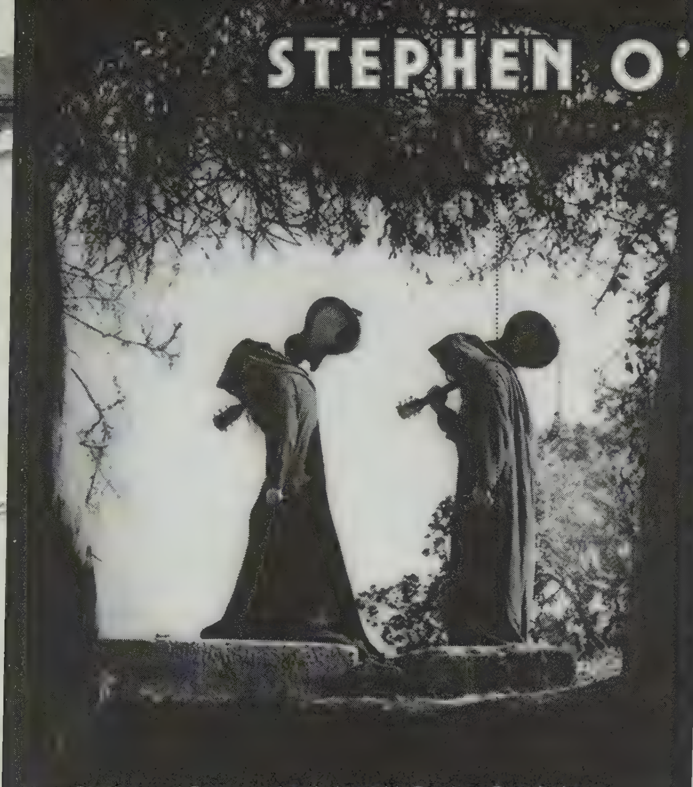
I was reading an Eliane Radigue interview recently and she described this thing with her music as exactly how I feel about my music with Sunn O))). It's a mirror. It's an open mirror, the music. It offers this palette that's reflective and the listener or the person experiencing it sees their own state of mind in it, or projects their own experience off of it. It's evocative in that way.

Of course there's moods and themes and feelings and stuff adherent to the music itself, but it also offers this whole other level of experiences by not being linear, lyrical music. And that's why something like My Wall or some of the stuff Attila's been involved with kind of transforms the structure of the music. But he, Attila especially, can also promote that sort of reflectivity. Because his performance style and his sound is so transcendent. I don't think he really exists in 2008, you know? He exists in 1488 and also 2888. You know?

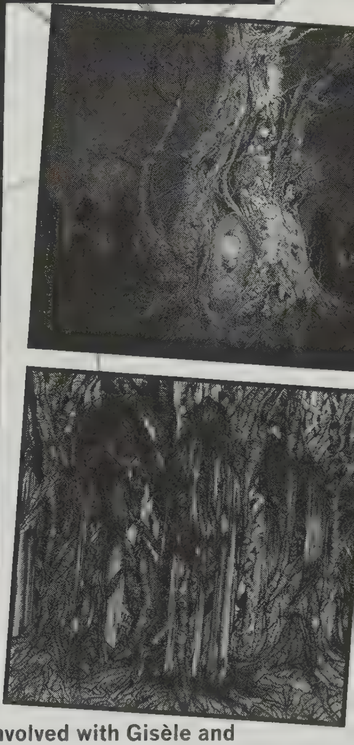
How often do you feel like an engineer and how often do you just feel like an almost divine force to the cosmos or something? I think you know what I mean.
I know what you mean. I think it might be idealistic to consider it as a channel from some other space. Although that's what it is, I mean, you're just an instrument in a circuit.


Sunn O))) in Mexico City, 2009. Photo Gisèle Vienne.

STEPHEN O'MALLEY



Stephen and Greg, carrying that weight. Courtesy Greg Anderson.



Album sleeves, from top: *Altar* and *Black One*.

So, you feel that way, then? That something will happen with you in this creation?
Yeah. When I'm able to get rid of the ego—which isn't very often. I mean, everyone tries to do that constantly, but... That's what it is. There's the guitar and there's me. Then there's the amplifiers. These are all part of a bigger circuit. There's the electricity, that's the main force of it. But when we're making records it's really sculpted. That's the feeling. Even beyond engineering. I mean, Randall, and Mell Detmer, our engineer, we're trying to sculpt, out of this mass. It's a huge piece of marble.

And you were turned onto Randall Dunn through his work with Earth?
No, he just contacted us. "I'm from Seattle, whatever..." And we met him. I don't remember how it went, but he helped Dylan Carlson get it together to make Hex, Or Printing in the Infernal Method. Then he recorded Hex, of course. But we met him before that. I don't think we really started working together until about that time.

How did you get involved with Gisèle and Dennis? Because wasn't Kindertotenlieder initially a one-off soundtrack project?
Exactly.

And now it's KTL. It's a whole other Stephen O'Malley project. So how did KTL come together?
Peter Rehburg was someone I'd been in touch with. He's guested in Sunn O))) a few times. He brought Gisèle to a Sunn O))) concert four years ago in Geneva, where we met. And we just kept in touch. She started working on a new piece. She wanted Sunn O))) to collaborate with Rehburg and Peter knew that would be pretty hard to have happen. Greg doesn't really have a big interest in—well, certainly not theater, I don't think—but these smaller collaboration things. Mainly because he's running a record label. He's got his business and stuff.

But I'm really into that—especially at the time—and I wanted to try a new format, a new thing. Just soundtrack work. So Peter got that going. And Gisèle and Dennis started developing Kindertotenlieder and we decided that I would collaborate with Peter on the

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music. Then it went really well from the get-go, just me and Peter playing together. And then, we thought, "let's have fun with this, let's name the band... let's have a band." Because we're playing live in the piece, just make it a band. Just to make it more real. And then Peter's booking agent asked, "hey, you want to do some festival shows?" Sure!

So, who set up the soundtrack for Victor Sjöstrom's The Phantom Carriage?
Sam Dunn who used to work at Tartan. He's a fan of KTL and Sunn O))) and Pita, and contacted me: "Let's do something together, I'll present you some projects and you tell me what would work."

You were just talking about film and it would seem that Sunn O))) and KTL and a lot of the stuff you do—especially Randall and that soundtrack music you do—make sense. Because you're already doing that. You know, it's just the pictures are happening in here, in the audience's head.
A bunch of stuff got licensed recently for the new Jarmusch film, stuff from Altar, a bunch of Boris stuff. Some Earth stuff too. For the soundtrack. It's like a Southern Lord compendium. When we met him he was saying stuff like "this is perfect for the..." It's this film about this guy in Spain, traveling around or whatever. He was like "I can't believe you guys haven't done this more." And I'm like "wait till you hear our new record." I like the idea of composing soundtracks, but when you do that, you set boundaries, actually.

You're matching your sound to an image, which is different than creating a feeling or creating an image.
It would have to be a pretty specific, cool, natural relationship to have Sunn O))) score a film, for example. We'd have to do it from the get-go. I mean licensing tracks for a film is one thing. It's a complement, actually. Because that means Jarmusch is like "I heard this with my..." Or maybe it even influences his direction, sometimes that happens too.

I'm actually working with this Belgian filmmaker next year, Oren Ambarchi, scoring his film. We'll see how that goes. It's something I'm certainly interested in. But not necessarily as a destination, you know? Just as another format. Scoring for theater is really interesting. Because if you're into structure and music, that's where you can really get analytical and super-structured. Because you have to relate to choreographic structure, dialog, pacing, the narrative, ideological structure.

Like Dennis Cooper's writing—what the fuck is the relationship between his writing and my music? You know?

It's really interesting about you and the directions you take, because black metal tends to stay black metal.
Very conservative. It's super-conservative, actually.

And you're always going to be many things. You'll be Sunn O))). You'll be KTL. You'll be Stephen O'Malley. You'll be opening for Steve Stapleton. You'll be doing a soundtrack. You're this constant bit of evolvement.
It's just a necessary thing. It relates to that thing we were talking about with New York, 'slave of New York.' People with music, too, they get locked into their style and they play... And if they transfer they're somehow 'betraying' something in their sensibility. But for me, it would be betraying my sensibility if I wasn't trying to keep going into new places.

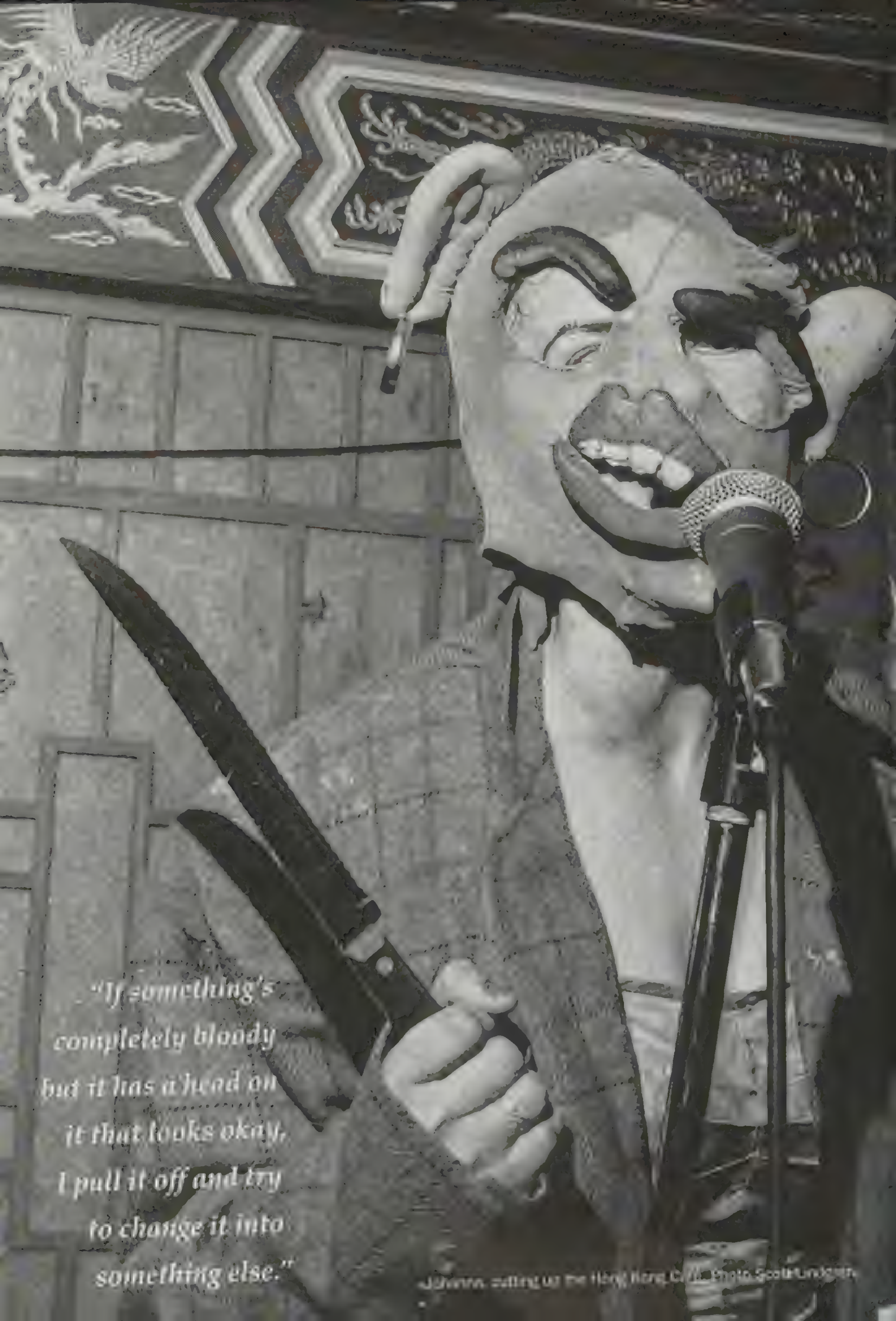
How has the audience been for you? Like "Oh, man, that dude was in Thorr's Hammer, oh Burning fucking Witch, man that's so deep..." and then you're coming out with Sunn O)))? Were they at first like "fuck that, it's too slow"?
Some, yeah.

Someone on YouTube has this thing called "Sunn O))) Sped Up," have you checked that out? That's very funny.
Yeah, it's like the whole album...

You're going out there completely re-leveling the playing field. You're saying "we can have some chick just do some little ballad," "we're going to take Boris, just down [guitar riff]." Drums, Sunn O))) has drums on this one with Boris. You know, it's really...
Psychedelic.

Yeah! And I think that's so nice that you keep that so open that it can be a different name or whatever. You're not locked into anything at all.
I don't want to be locked. I don't want to be locked.

Khanate.



> "If something's completely bloody but it has a head on it that looks okay, I pull it off and try to change it into something else."

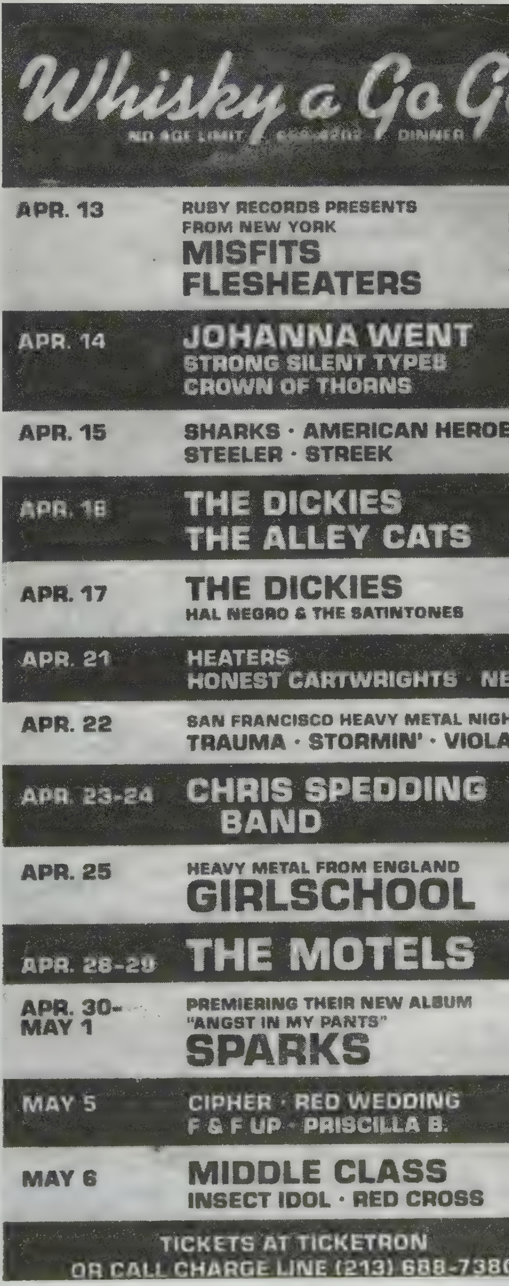
Johanna, cutting up the Hong Kong Cafe. Photo Scott Lindgren.

APR

JOHANNA WENT

YOU JUST NEVER KNOW where you're going to run into people you admire. I was screening Tom Schiller's Nothing Lasts Forever as part of the 2006 Sitges Film Festival in Spain and handing out postcards for a book about Tom when an American guy in line said, "Oh, I know Tom!" I invited him in to say hi to Tom and he introduced his wife, Johanna. I looked at her and said, "Johanna Went?" She nodded. "Wow, I've got Hyena and Live on Broadway! How cool!"

A year-and-a-half later I'm on my last weekend after three months in L.A. and I get an email through my website: "Hi Shade, it's Johanna Went, we met in Spain. I have a show this weekend at Track 16..." With the help of three buses and seventy minutes I saw the most amazing collection of handmade costumes and storytelling props in one session, delivering a miasmic flow of sensation, and one big mess. Ladies and gentleman, I present the delicately designed rage of one of the more amazing women I know, Johanna Went.



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SHADE RUPE: Were you born in Seattle?
JOHANNA WENT: I was born in Buffalo. My family moved to Kansas, and my dad started working for Boeing, and he transferred up to Washington.

How old were you when you moved to Seattle?
About five. First we lived in this area called White Center. We lived in the projects there. White Center is Rat City. That's what they used to call it.

I remember Seattle was pretty off the map for a while.
There was a pretty good punk scene. Theater and music, you know, it was a pretty good cultural—although, where I grew up there wasn't any culture at all. I lived in the projects, so I didn't get to downtown Seattle when I was a kid very much. But they've always had kind of a bohemian thing kind of going on in Seattle, always, they had a lot of jazz clubs and good theater. You know, small theaters.

When did you start going into downtown Seattle from White Center?
Well, then we moved to Georgetown, which is right where Boeing Field is, when I went to high school.

Was something itching inside you and you found something, some reason to go downtown? Flower children seemed to be pretty popular then.
You know, the hippie scene was like—I was still in high school during the whole hippie thing, and then I didn't really—like I couldn't really grasp the whole hippie thing because when you're poor why do you want to act like you're poor? My mother died when I was around eleven, so I had to take care of my younger brother and sister all the time and do all the chores at home. During high school I was totally into the music and everything of the late 60s. I liked all the music, and Jimi Hendrix was from Seattle, which was like a big deal.

Because you just weren't wearing the dainty clothes and putting the flowers in your hair then.
No, I just couldn't—I wasn't into it.

I've seen a photograph of you from 1974, and you've got some feathers in your hair, but you've also got some really great face paint. Your eyes are done up and it almost looks like you're wearing glitter or sand on your face.
That was when I first started performing with Tom Murrin, the Alien Comic.

Was he in Seattle at the time that you were?
Yeah, he was in Seattle. I met him at a party, and he said, "Come over to my apartment; we're going to do Balloon Theater." I was already hanging out at the small theaters in Seattle because I wanted to do something. I felt like I had some kind of talent, but I didn't know quite what it was, so I would hang out at the small theaters and help with the makeup or do whatever I could do and get a part once in a while. Tom had just started performing with this woman, Alex Soul Dancer. She was one of the founding members of Para-Troupe, and she and Tom were doing these shows. They were doing Balloon Theater sometimes with him too. He was in New York at the time of Sam Shepherd and those playwrights, the La MaMa playwrights, and all the different avant-garde plays.

He was really into avant-garde theater. Cock-Strong was one of his plays that La MaMa did, and it was directed by John Vaccaro of the Theater of the Absurd, and he knew all those people from the Living Theater and the Theater of the Ridiculous and on and on and on. He was like totally into the whole Theater of the Absurd and Theater of the Ridiculous, and they'd wear a lot of glitter makeup and whatever. We started doing that and just going out on the streets and just doing like weird pieces that we would not really practice or anything.

That's fun. How many people did he have in his troupe at that time?
This particular group, Balloon Theater, which he made up, anybody could show up. You never knew who was going to show up. People would just show up at his place, and we'd just go out in droves.

Ticket for Track 16 opening of 'Ablutions of a Nefarious Nature', 2007

What about you made him become attracted to you to grab you and drag you along for some fun street performance?
It was one of those things where you meet somebody and you go, "I have to know this person. This person is way too interesting." We were talking about John Waters, and we were talking about Divine, and talking about all these things and it just was like I just had to know him. And he knew that I was in a play then at this little theater, Stage 1 or whatever, and he just said, "Come on over and be in Balloon Theater." That was the first time I went out and that was when I got my picture taken. It was on the front page of either the Seattle Times or Post-Intelligencer.

Did you do this down at Pike Place Market?
Yeah. Now you'd get arrested for doing what we were doing.

What were you doing that you would get arrested for?
Just running around having fun and acting crazy.

So, you didn't have a permit to run around and act crazy then?
No, but back then it was much looser. There weren't all the rules that there are now. They didn't arrest us there, but a lot of places we'd get stopped by the police and they'd make us leave or whatever, but really, I mean, it was a different time. It was just mostly like, "Oh, okay, there's those people, those street performers. That's interesting." Most of the time it was okay. I mean, the times that we almost got arrested were more in other places, but in Seattle we got stopped a few times.

When did you leave Georgetown and get your own place?
After high school I went to beauty school, and then I was working as a hairdresser for a while, like for a year. Then I met Tom. Then I started working for Pay 'n' Save and then I had my own place in Beacon Hill.

Were you and Tom usually dressing up and putting on face paint and glitter and makeup as part of these performances?

Yeah, everybody did.

When did you begin performing on your own, or were you already getting noticed while performing with Tom?

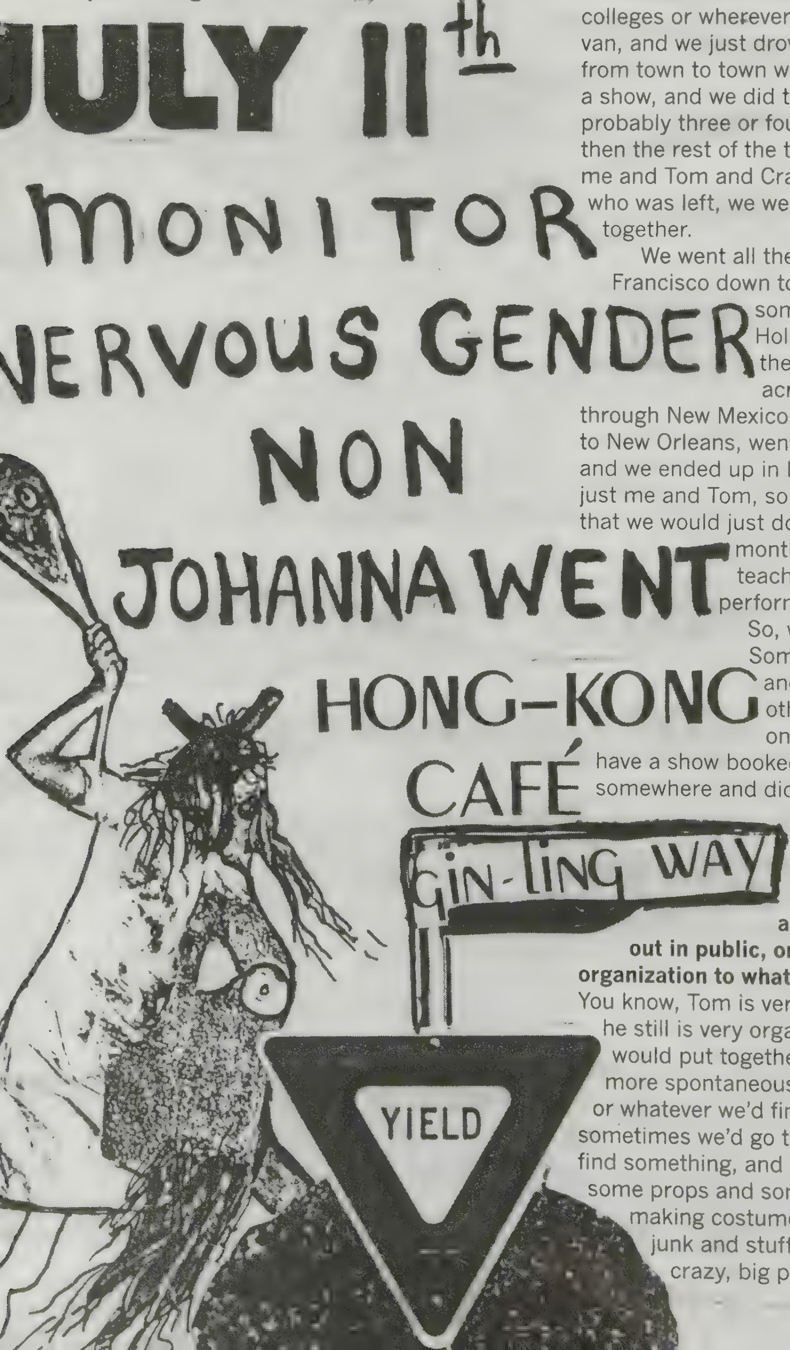
I left Seattle around 75, and Tom and a group of people took off and started doing shows around. We called ourselves Para-Troupe at that time, and we started doing shows wherever we could do them, at colleges or wherever. Our friends had a big van, and we just drove around and went from town to town wherever we could book a show, and we did that for a few months, probably three or four months or so, and then the rest of the troupe left, and then me and Tom and Craig, one of the people who was left, we went and did some shows together.

We went all the way from San Francisco down to L.A., and we did some shows at La MaMa Hollywood. We performed there, and then we went across the country, through New Mexico, down to Texas, went to New Orleans, went up the East Coast, and we ended up in Baltimore. Then it was just me and Tom, so Tom and I decided that we would just do a show every day for a month, because we were still teaching ourselves how to perform.

So, we would do a show. Some shows were booked and we got paid, and other shows we'd just do on the street. If we didn't have a show booked that day, we went out somewhere and did a show.

Now, when you're saying "do a show," was it basically having a rip-roaring, fun time out in public, or was there any sort of organization to what you were presenting?

You know, Tom is very organized, and he still is very organized in what he would put together, but my way is more spontaneous. We'd use like trash or whatever we'd find for props, and sometimes we'd go to a thrift store and find something, and we'd just put together some props and some things, and I started making costumes at that point out of junk and stuff, and we'd make these crazy, big pieces, and we'd use



whatever we had, whether it was like a giant piece of Styrofoam or a piece of cardboard we'd somehow get into or put on or paint or do something with and a lot of trash and anything we had.

And we'd do a show. Tom and I did magic tricks, but we wouldn't do it like regular magic tricks. We'd just do it casually as we were doing whatever we were doing, and so we did that. I didn't know any magic tricks, but Tom taught me some, and we could talk and perform at the same time. We'd talk at once, and we'd say whatever we wanted to say and Tom sometimes would tell a story or whatever, and then we had these theater games that we would play and we would just bring a boom box and put on whatever music we liked and dance around.

It just sounds like so much fun.

Oh my gawd, it was so much fun. It was the best. Then we would figure out how long we were going to do it, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, whatever. And we would just do it. And people would write about us here and there. When we were in Baltimore somebody wrote about us for the Sun Times. We had a little story in there, and it was really fun. It was a lot of fun. It was very, very creative, and we changed our shows all the time. We didn't do the same show. We did whatever we felt like that day. There weren't any real rules except try not to hurt yourself, and try not to hurt anybody else.

Was this Tom's van that you were driving around in?

No, at that point we took the train or we took the bus or whatever.

Where were you sleeping?

People used to put us up.

Johanna Went's band at the Whiskey. Photo Ed Colver.

You'd just meet people through the mail?
Yeah. Actually, Tom had gone around and done some things on his own for a while, and so that's why he knew people in Texas and New Orleans. In Houston we did something at the Contemporary Arts Gallery because one of the girls he'd been staying with had a close friend who ran the art gallery. Back then it was such a different world. It was more of an open sense. There was still that holdover from the hippies that you're not scared of people.

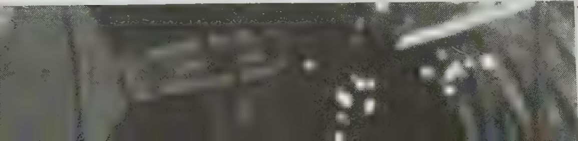
It's impossible thinking of someone like Andy Warhol doing what he did here in New York today. Little kids running away and living with this crazy artist in New York in his studio?
They'd arrest him.

Exactly, for housing these people. You were having such a great time with Tom, but then you must have chosen different directions at some point.
Then we went to New York after Baltimore, and New York was great because Tom knew a lot of people there, and we had a lot of different places to perform. We still did some street performances because we were really at the point where we said we're going to teach ourselves to perform just by performing, and the more shows we did, the more confident we got, the better we got at it, and the more skills we got, we were more in tune with each other. We hung out in New York for a while, then went up to Canada and did some shows, and then we came back to L.A., and then Tom's father was ill. So, Tom stayed down in L.A. for a while, and I went up to Seattle for about maybe a month, two months or something and I did some stuff on my own. I did an unauthorized, uninvited show at Bumbershoot, where I met a whole bunch of people from Seattle that I am still very close to. They even moved down here to L.A. at one point.

And then I went back with Tom, and we did some more shows, but then Tom decided he wanted to go to Japan and Hong Kong and India or wherever. He decided he was going to take off and go do that, and so I just stayed in L.A., and I started working at a Wallpaper Warehouse, part-time job, and then I started performing in little, tiny clubs here. Then eventually I started hanging out at the punk clubs.

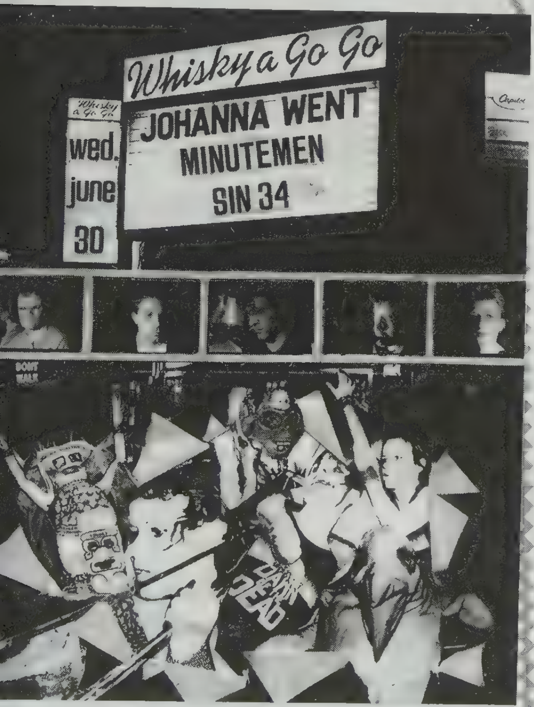
I was at The Masque a few times, and then The Masque closed, and then I started hanging out at the Hong Kong Café and got them to book me, and then that was it from then on. Then I met Z'ev on my first night on stage, and everything just kind of turned around.

You met Z'ev your first night at the Hong Kong Cafe?
Yep.



Tampons are fun! Courtesy Mark Wheaton.

What, was he doing his own show that night and then you were opening for him?
No, he wasn't. The Plugz were on the bill. It was this one night the guy there said, "Okay, come on in. You can do this." Because I'd been nagging him for months, and he said, "Okay, fine. Come in and just do your show and whatever." So, I just had this guy I didn't really know who was a drummer, and he came and played for me, and he showed up late, and I was upset about that. Finally, I go on and I do my show, and everybody seems to really be surprised by it, they were really into it, and then Z'ev was in the audience and he came up to me and said, "Get rid of that drummer. No good." I said, "I know. I don't really like him either." Z'ev said, "I'm a drummer. I'll play for you." And then that was it.

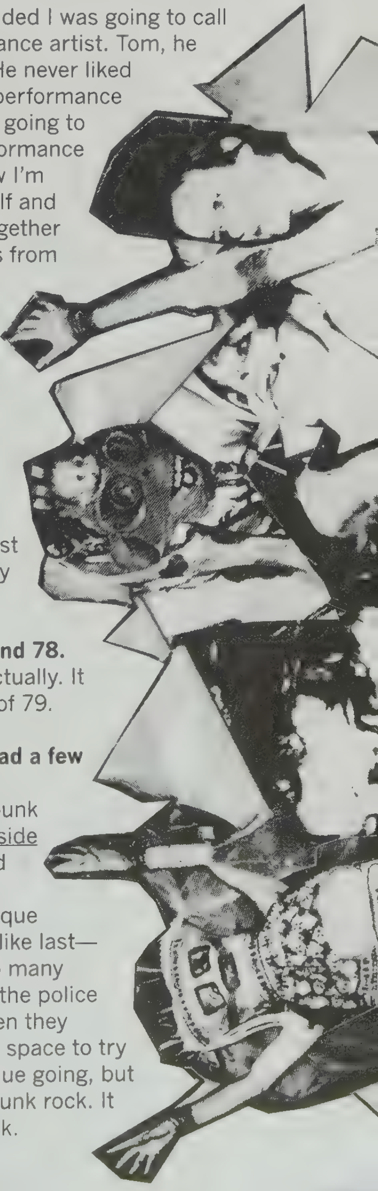


Now, from the performances you were doing with Tom to your debut night at the Hong Kong Café you had a boom box, so was this your first time with live musicians at the Hong Kong?
I'm trying to think if we ever had people play with us before. Yeah, it was. It was my first time with a live musician. I was performing like this little coffee house stuff, and I'd perform sometimes in a theater, and any place I could get a gig, I would perform. I went up and performed at the prison at Lompoc one time. That was terrifying.

How were you approaching punk rock venues with your work? How were you telling them what you wanted to do?
At that time I decided I was going to call myself a performance artist. Tom, he never liked that. He never liked calling himself a performance artist. I said, "I'm going to call myself a performance artist." That's how I'm going to bill myself and whatever. I put together a bunch of photos from different shows, and I just went in there and kept talking to the guy and talking to the guy, and I think he paid me like fifty bucks or something. And that was it. I'm telling you that first night things totally turned around.

So, that was around 78.
Well, it was 79, actually. It was the summer of 79.

Punk Magazine had a few issues by then.
First generation punk fanzines, like Flipside and Slash covered the scene at The Masque. The Masque was kind of in its like last—there were just so many problems with it, the police and whatever. Then they moved to another space to try to keep The Masque going, but yeah, there was punk rock. It was real punk rock.



Johanna Went first performance with Balloon Theater April 1974 Farmer's Market, Seattle, Washington

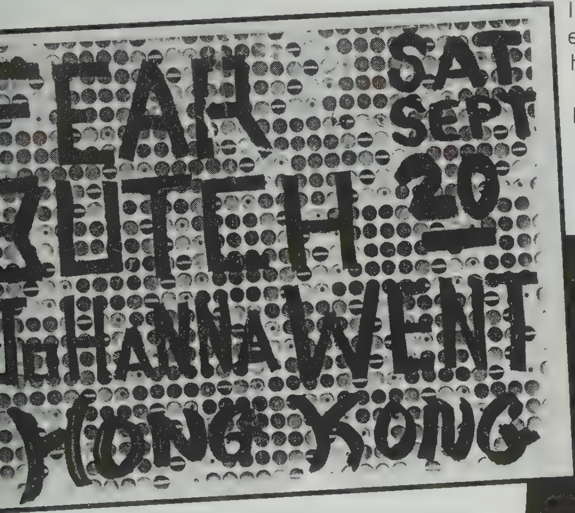
Seattle Times photo courtesy Johanna Went.

Punk rock had, at that time an intensity to it, almost violence to it, a very anti-ness to it. I would think the stuff you were doing with Tom would have been much more fun and playful, whereas moving into the world of punk rock I'd almost think it would have gotten heavier, darker, noisier, whatever. When did that transition happen for you?
Well, you know what? It was a transition in that I was already doing things that were really weird. It was not that weird for what I was doing, for the places where I was performing. That's when I went to The Masque. I went, "Yeah, I'm good here." I'd never played there, but I was totally there already. I was there, I just didn't have a venue.

How many performers did you have in your original band?
Just Z'ev. I only played with Z'ev then. I was with Z'ev through the late 80s, and then he went to Amsterdam, and then I started playing with Brock Wheaton who had been playing with his band Chinas Comidas from Seattle. Brock started playing with me, and then right away Mark [Wheaton] started playing with me. I went through different people. Sometimes if somebody didn't have a show they'd play with me. K.K. from the Screamers played for me one night, and that

was really great. Different people would play with me, and once I started working with Mark and Brock, then they started bringing in other people that they wanted to play with.

Was frenetic body movement and unusual vocals part of your work with Tom, or did that come later after you began performing on your own?
No, it was a progression. That's what I moved into before. I already was there before. I was pretty into that. I mean, my part was becoming more and more aggressive, and it kind of scared people in the theater kind of situations.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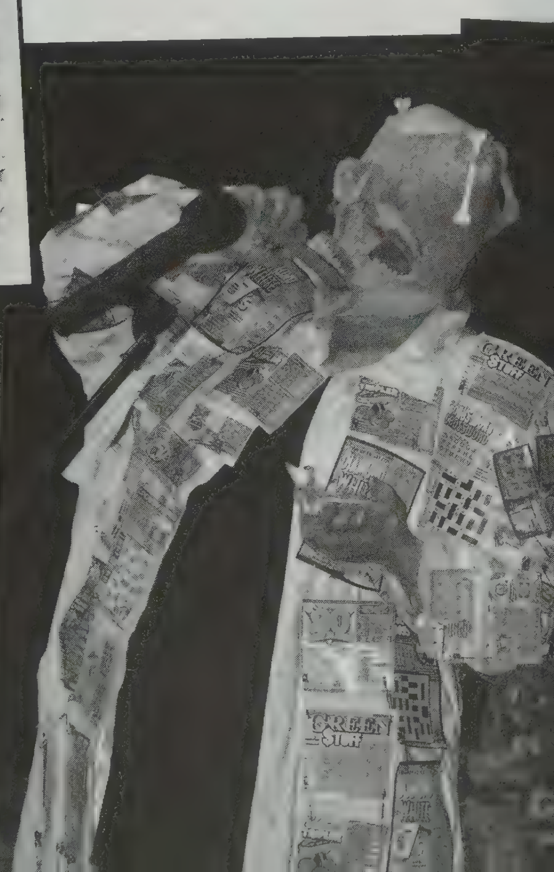
Were they just uneasy watching someone behave this way, or was it more the stuff you were throwing around?
I started using blood soon after I started to work with Tom, like when I was in New York I started making up my blood and making blood things and doing that whole thing. I'd developed my style before I played the Hong Kong. I just didn't have music, which I really wanted. My own music.

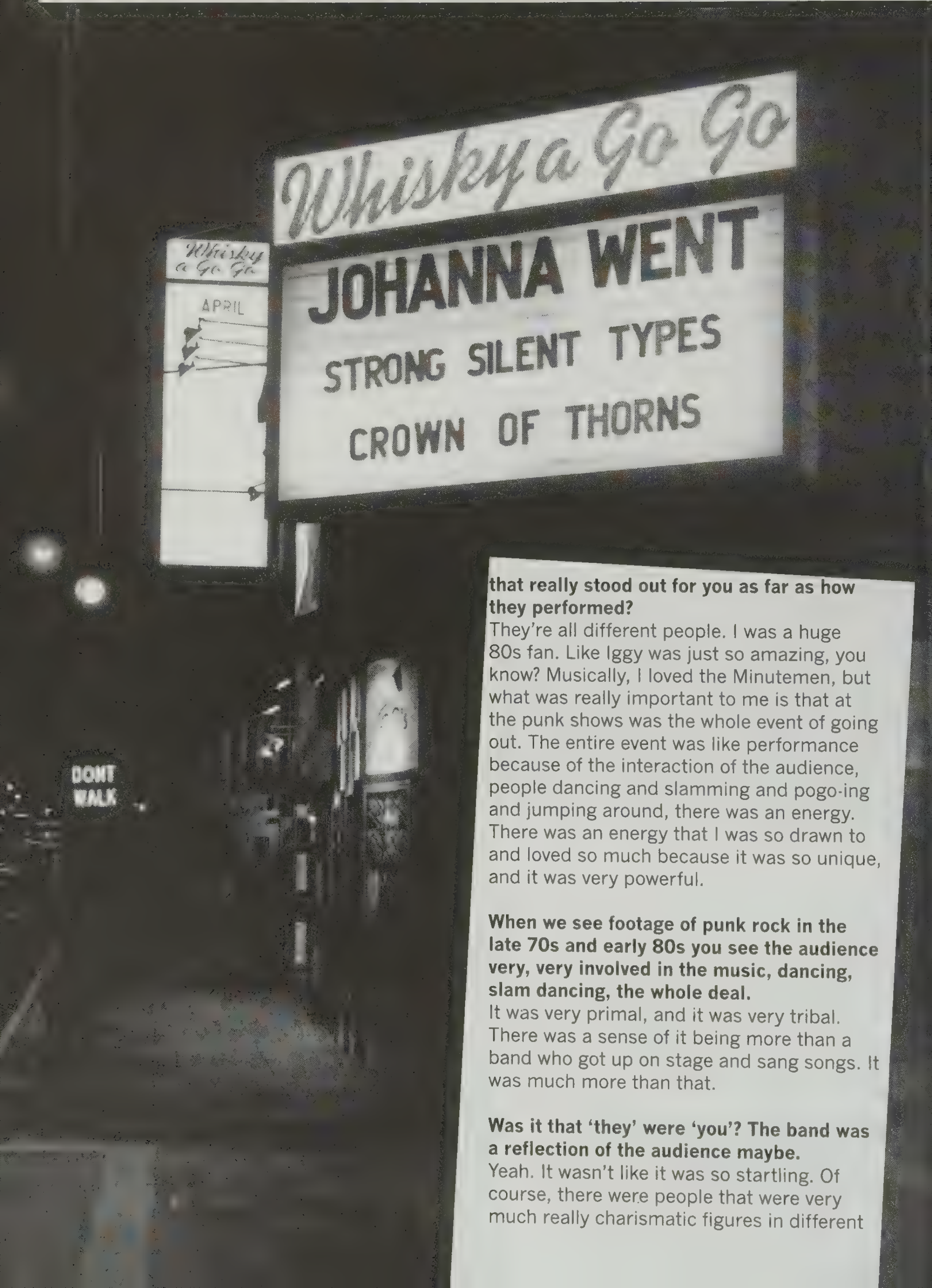
And the Wheatons helped.
I wanted improvised music. I didn't want to do songs. I wanted improvised music.

Flyer courtesy Mark Wheaton. Right: Johanna testing out those choppers at Track 16, 2007. Photo Shade Rupe.

It does sound like it's made up on the spot when you're listening to it. What I find really interesting is how you obviously made friends inside the world of punk rock. I mean, Darby Crash might have thrown himself around on stage and gotten cut a little bit or whatever, but nobody else in punk clubs is throwing blood and bits of meat all over the place, splashing around in it. It's amazing that punk rock was happening for you to perform inside of.
Darby Crash was more like a performance artist than any of the rest of the bands, you know. Darby was very volatile. He was very—he had an intensity, and of course they sang songs. I was a big, huge Darby Crash fan. I thought he was really fabulous and so exciting to watch. Honestly, I just found him mesmerizing.

I've just seen bits of footage, and it just looks great. Everything just seemed so electric. Who were some other people

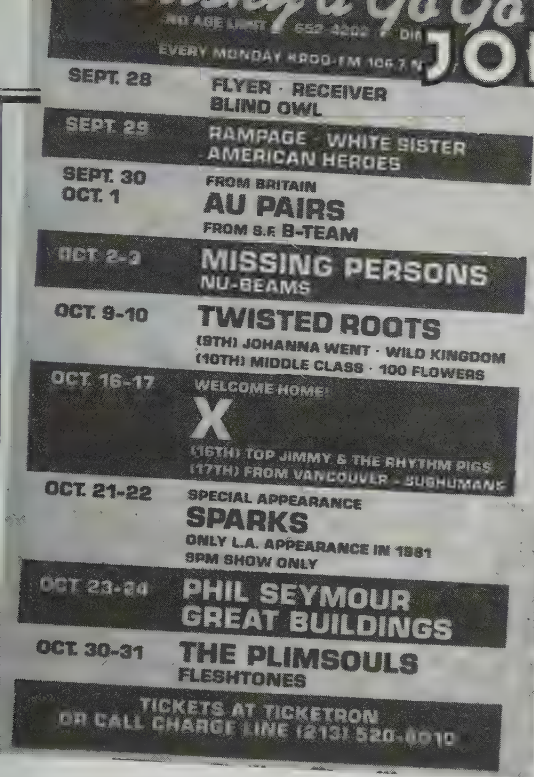




that really stood out for you as far as how they performed?
They're all different people. I was a huge 80s fan. Like Iggy was just so amazing, you know? Musically, I loved the Minutemen, but what was really important to me is that at the punk shows was the whole event of going out. The entire event was like performance because of the interaction of the audience, people dancing and slamming and pogo-ing and jumping around, there was an energy. There was an energy that I was so drawn to and loved so much because it was so unique, and it was very powerful.

When we see footage of punk rock in the late 70s and early 80s you see the audience very, very involved in the music, dancing, slam dancing, the whole deal.
It was very primal, and it was very tribal. There was a sense of it being more than a band who got up on stage and sang songs. It was much more than that.

Was it that 'they' were 'you'? The band was a reflection of the audience maybe.
Yeah. It wasn't like it was so startling. Of course, there were people that were very much really charismatic figures in different



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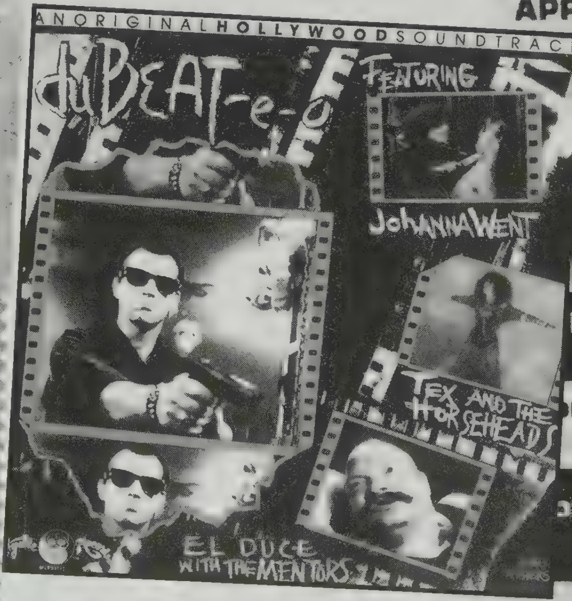
bands, but more than that it was the people that came to the shows. They dressed up and they were into it. It was a scene, and it was a scene that crossed so many different areas. Like there were always photographers at the show. People with video cameras, even though video cameras were just starting to be available—easy for people to purchase. Hardly anybody had them outside, but somebody would always have a video camera. It just started happening. MTV hadn't even started I don't think when The Masque was going, and then it started—then there was MTV and there was this whole idea of something being visually interesting to look at.

I feel like there really was this primal sense of like a tribal gathering of the people that were there because they really wanted to be there and really needed to be there because there was no place else to be. This was the place that you could go and you felt like you were part of something that was really—

Alive.
Yeah. It was alive.

Were there other bands? Were there people that began following you? You know, the way people might go to a Germs show again and again or a Cramps show or Dead Kennedys. Were you starting to see people following you also?
Yeah. I mean, you have to have a following in order to start headlining and doing your own shows and putting together a night and whatever. You have to have a following. You have to have people that come. I think one of the things that was in my favor was that my shows did change a lot. I think people came to see what I was going to do next, but I also think that there's a sense—I mean, one of the things that I'm always really touched by is that there's a lot of people would come to me and say, "You're really the first artist that I ever liked" or "that I was ever exposed to" or "this is the first time I really understood art."

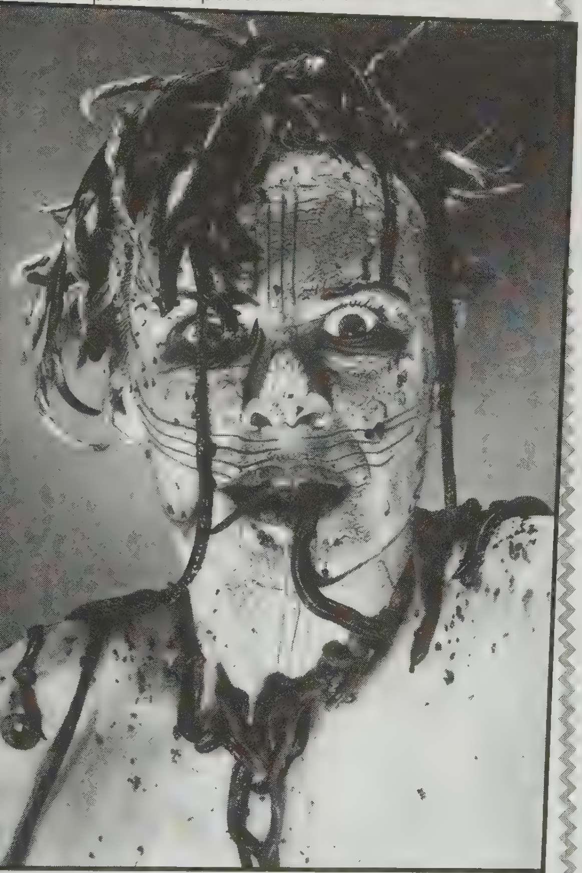


I was playing in places where they weren't the people that went to galleries, necessarily, but there were also people that went to galleries. There were graphic artists. There were videographers. There were filmmakers. There was fashion. There were dancers. The whole thing was so inspiring.

People were inspired by the music. People were inspired by the shows. People were

Previous page: Whiskey a Go Go marquee. Photo Ed Colver. This page: *du-BEAT-e-o* album cover.

inspired by the fans that went there. It was a whole snowball of inspiration. I have to say I'm really happy to be part of the West Coast scene. I'd go up to San Francisco and perform. I performed in Seattle a few times.



I feel like the whole west side of the United States had a different feel for what punk rock was than, say, New York. It was different. And it had its own style. It had its own look. It had its music, and I am really excited that I was part of that scene. I understood it and fit in more than in New York.

It's interesting, because when you think 'performance art,' you often would think of New York. Yet you were out doing it in the L.A. punk scene. Had you heard of anyone else attempting to work performance art or something non-musical into the L.A. punk scene?

Well, the Kipper Kids performed I think at The Whiskey. They performed at one of the PiL shows. They performed at one of The Masque locations one time. I wasn't really familiar with the whole performance art scene, and I'd try to get gigs at LACE, and I tried to perform at other performance spaces. I think they didn't understand my work or they weren't interested in it because it was really messy or whatever.

Then later, like in probably around 82 or so there was a club called The Theoretical. Yeah, there were others. My friend Priscilla. She lives in Germany now. She used to do performance pieces. We did a party for the opening of Vinyl Fetish, the record store, and she performed and I performed. There wasn't a lot of performance art in the clubs at the time. There wasn't.

Did you ever catch Nina Hagen doing any sort of performance art as part of her musical act?

No, I didn't. I certainly was a fan of her work, and I certainly was a fan of Wendy O'Williams. And Diamanda Galás, but I think that most people wouldn't do the amount of work that I would do to bring all my props and crap in there, make a big mess and clean it up.

Did bands have to go after you and just perform in the midst of a bunch of worms and blood and giant tampons?

We always tried to clean up, but once I started headlining shows, I'd just go on last and it wouldn't be such a problem. But, in the beginning, we had to clean up everything. Sometimes there'd be junk left on stage, but we really tried to be respectful of the other bands, certainly. Sometimes there was stuff left over that I just threw out in the audience, but pretty much I tried to clean everything up.

Would the band help you clean up?

Everyone helped me clean up. Yeah, everybody would help me clean up a little bit.

And how would you get everything to the performance space?

I'd load up my car, go down there. Then later my friends, Peggy and George, started

---

Photo Frank Gargani.

helping me, and George had a van. You know we'd pack everything in there. It got to the point where it would take a couple cars.

It would seem that when you're giving birth to infants in Jell-O and there's just a whole rainbow of activity on stage, that it would just take a long time to get it all together.
I went a long way from the early days, that's for sure. When I split up with Tom and I started playing at this little coffee house called John's Place I used to take the bus, and I'd take the bus with so much stuff. I'd have a giant box. I'd have a backpack. I'd try to carry all my stuff there, and then finally the guy at the club, he liked me performing there a lot, so he used to give me rides sometimes to bring my stuff there. Sometimes we'd have to make a couple of carloads, but a lot of stuff I'd throw away afterwards because it would just be soaked or people would take things home for souvenirs or whatever. But it was a process, I'm telling you.

Did you ever recycle some of the stuff that you were bringing on stage with you?
Yeah, sure. It just depends on how wet it got, you know, but I would take things and then bring them back and make something out of them, and people would take props and things, and I'd build my new props. I've always kind of cannibalized my costumes and props. I take parts of them. If something's completely bloody but it has a head on it that looks okay, I pull it off and try to change it into something else.

You also had a lot of one-time events. The Statue of Liberty prop wasn't used in several shows. It happened once.
That was during the Olympics in 84. It was a prop we found on the street somewhere. It was a piece of plastic of the Statue of Liberty I found somewhere, and then I made it into that costume. That's pretty much what I would do. I'd take trash, stuff that was already in the trash and then reuse it.

And how often were you incorporating found animals into your show?
Those weren't found. I'd go down to the market. There's a big Latino market downtown, and they sell goats' heads and pigs' heads and anything. I was really big on beef lips for a long time, and my friend Peggy would help me sew them onto this vest. I had this metal vest that I made. It was originally a mannequin, like a wire mannequin, and I cut it up, and I used the bodice part as the vest, and then I would hang beef lips on it. All over the vest I'd put beef lips, and it'd be like, oh my god.

That seems like something you'd have to do fresh rather than take on the bus with you.
No, I was off the bus at that point.

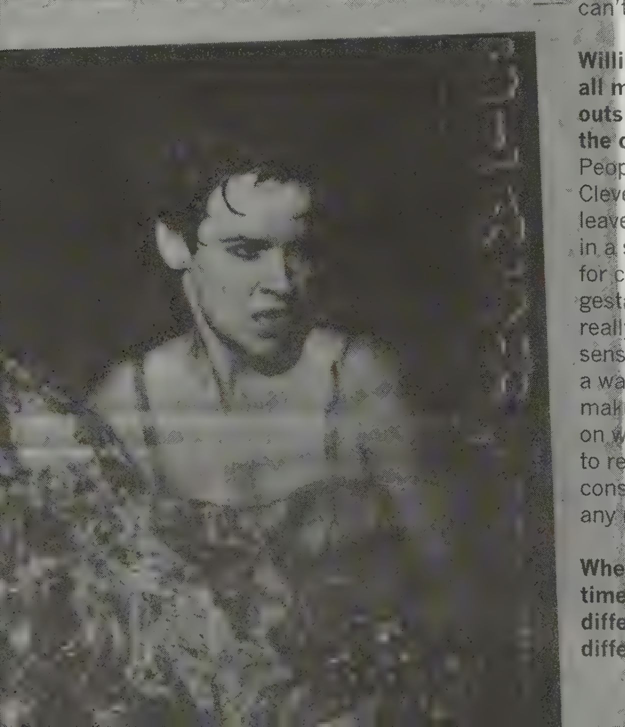
How did you get involved with the film DuBeat-e-o?
Well, Alan Sacks, who I understand now produces or is the manager for the Jonas

Z'ev, Johanna, and her husband Stuart Cornfeld at Track 16, Los Angeles, May, 2007. Photo Shade Rupe.

Brothers, he was a really energetic guy. He'd come to my shows, and he asked me to be in his films. He wanted me to be in the dream sequence.

There are a few other notorious people involved in that film. Joan Jett, Tex and the Horseheads, and of course, El Duce from the Mentors.
El Duce came from Seattle. Veda was up in Seattle for a while too, like for quite a while. Ze Whiz Kidz and The Tupperwares.

Seattle produces some cool stuff. There's something different in the air. It's its own thing, and I think that's what allows it to produce such individual people when they do come out. Because there's also a lackadaisical "Hey, whatever man" thing going on that can make it hard to get things going on.
No, we knew we had to leave. We knew there wasn't going to be the support that we needed there. I felt like it was the beginning of the vision, but I really felt like I had to go somewhere else, I always was drawn to California, even as a kid. I always wanted to go to California.



New York has changed so much, and like we said, Andy Warhol couldn't do what he did today. It doesn't have that vital sense of somebody just playing music somewhere or just making art somewhere. It's become very much a business place, yet I was just in San Francisco, and you can do whatever you want there. You can walk around with crazy hair and safety pins through your cheeks and put on a show.
I know. San Francisco is great. It's really great. My friend Mark Pauline, he was living up there.

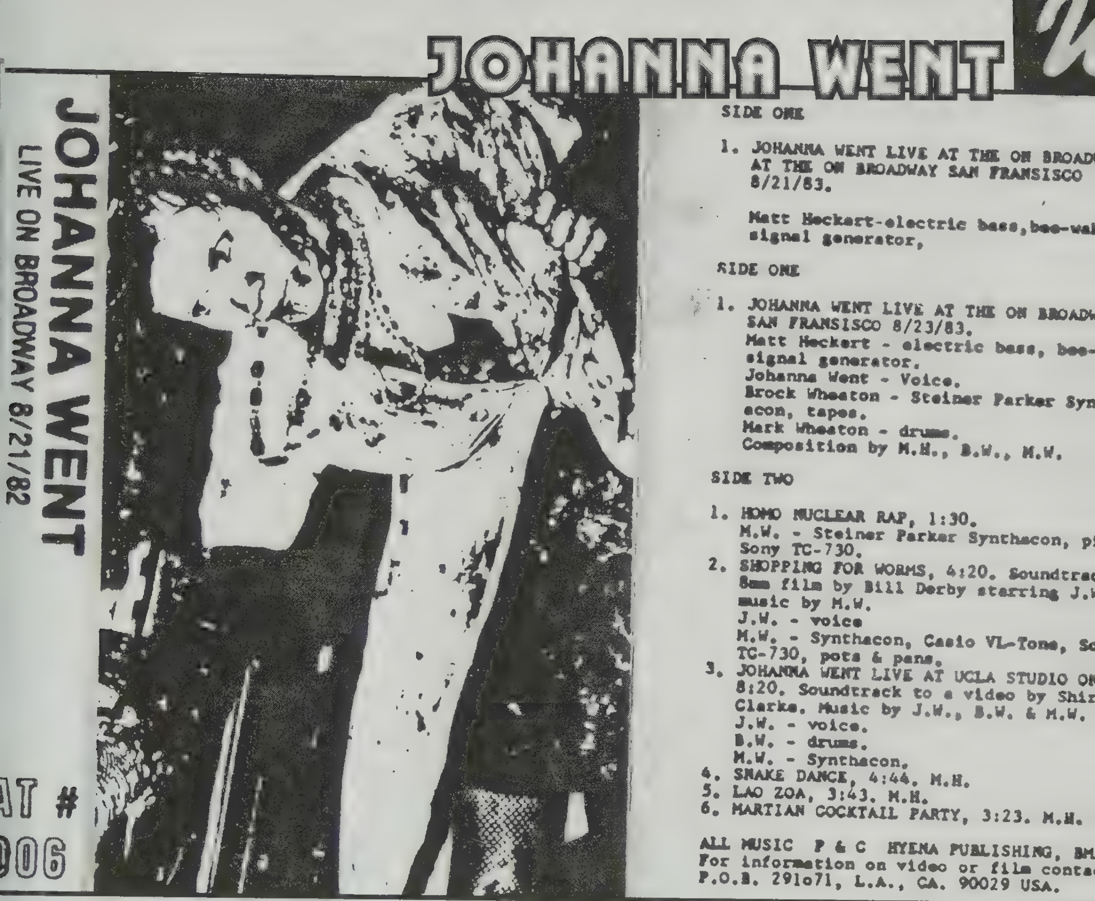
SRL.
Survival Research Laboratories, and I don't think they could have really survived anywhere else because there is such a respect for the bohemian spirit, and I feel like what's really happened everywhere is that those people cannot afford to be bohemian. The yuppies kind of ruined everything. It's just the sense of—

The sense of immediacy, the sense of now.
Even in New York a long time ago people could live there, people that were artists and bohemians could live there, but now they can't afford to.

Williamsburg's been sold and now they're all moving to Bushwick, which is an hour outside Manhattan. I miss street culture in the city.
People that come from those areas like Cleveland or somewhere... I think that you leave there because you need to, but I think in a smaller city there's a little bit more room for creativity and for that period, that kind of gestation of the creative spirit, that's what's really needed all along. Right now the artistic sense is not at a place of respectability in a way. It's either you make it really big and make a ton of money, you kind of capitalize on whatever it is you're doing and find a way to really sell it as a business, or people don't consider what you're doing as valid or has any real importance.

When did you start titling your shows? Each time you would perform you'd create a different title for each show. Each show is so different from each other.

Johanna on the cover of *Slash* magazine.
Photo by Scott Lindgren



JOHANNA WENT

JOHANNA WENT
LIVE ON BROADWAY 8/21/82

AT #
006

SIDE ONE

1. JOHANNA WENT LIVE AT THE ON BROADW
AT THE ON BROADWAY SAN FRANSISCO
8/21/83.

Matt Heckert-electric bass,bee-wa
signal generator,

SIDE ONE

1. JOHANNA WENT LIVE AT THE ON BROADW
SAN FRANSISCO 8/23/83.
Matt Heckert - electric bass, bee-
signal generator.
Johanna Went - Voice.
Brock Wheaton - Steiner Parker Syn
econ, tapes.
Mark Wheaton - drums.
Composition by M.H., B.W., M.W.

SIDE TWO

1. HOMO NUCLEAR RAP, 1:30.
M.W. - Steiner Parker Synthacon, p
Sony TC-730.
2. SHOPPING FOR WORMS, 4:20. Soundtrac
8mm film by Bill Derby starring J.
music by M.W.
J.W. - voice
M.W. - Synthacon, Casio VL-Tone, So
TC-730, pots & pans.
3. JOHANNA WENT LIVE AT UCLA STUDIO O
8:20. Soundtrack to a video by Shi
Clarke. Music by J.W., B.W. & M.W.
J.W. - voice.
B.W. - drums.
M.W. - Synthacon.
4. SNAKE DANCE, 4:44. M.H.
5. LAO ZOA, 3:43. M.H.
6. MARTIAN COCKTAIL PARTY, 3:23. M.H.

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I think I started titling them around 83, 84.

Your work started to change about this time also.

I started making larger pieces to use in my shows, and the process led me to seek out larger venues, and then I started performing in art spaces a little bit more. It took a long time before there were art spaces that really would want to present me, but I needed bigger spaces. I needed spaces where I could go in and set up over a period of time because my shows got bigger and more complicated with more people involved.

My ideas kept getting larger, and my costumes were getting bigger, and my props were getting more gigantic, and I needed more room. And by then people started being a little more respectful of performance art. People like Karen Finley opened a lot of doors for performance art. John Fleck here in L.A., he started performing in clubs. I remember in 82 at The Theoretical, and John used to perform there pretty often, and there started being more performance artists. So, it started being more acceptable and there was a period of time where people wanted to see what it was finally.

Times changed, and there were less clubs, and it was harder for me to get in and out of a club. It was just a lot more work. My life had kind of changed. I married Stuart in 86, and my whole existence changed. I started thinking in terms of bigger, more produced shows. When I say produced, I mean using more people. I just started thinking in terms of making larger, operatic-scale pieces, and the whole scene kind of shifted at the end of the 80s and into the 90s.

Then I broke my ankle in 90, and that was a serious problem for me. I was in pain for a long time. I'd do a show, and then I could barely walk. But even when I had a cast on my leg I was doing some collaboration things with Steven Holman. He's quite a character, and an amazing guy, a really interesting artist. He's from England, and he moved here in the late 80s, and we started hanging out, and he was in some of my shows, and then I was in some of his shows. Then after my leg was broken, he said, "Johanna, I know your leg's broken and stuff, but why don't we start doing these things. I'm going to start doing these little things at the Onyx Café." It was like this little coffee shop, and I said, "Really?" And I said, "Okay, look, I will do something, but it's just going to be a big mess." So, we called ourselves Big Mess.

He and I started doing these shows, and then Brian Routh, one of the Kipper Kids, he was playing with us sometimes. It was one of those things where we'd just show up, do a little show for whatever audience showed up, and it was free. And we'd just do these pieces just to do something. And it was something I felt comfortable about doing because it wasn't like a big show I had to put on where people had to pay or whatever, and honestly, we did some of the greatest shows. They were really, really fun. It felt like going back to my early days of just doing whatever. And it was the same kind of thing. We'd use some taped music. Either Mark would give us some music, and then Stephen would play his crazy music, and then we'd have this music, and we'd have an alarm clock, and when the alarm clock went off, we were done. So, it was very similar.

Tom Murrin did some Big Mess shows with us, and this guy Clam, he did some shows with us, and we did something at The Kitchen. We did like four nights or something at The Kitchen, but we were a really huge big mess—really huge messes, I'll say. They were so fabulous. I loved them so much. It was the same thing. It was a free for all. It was a total free for all, free expression, just constant at the same time, everybody doing whatever it was they felt like doing, sometimes we naturally came together, sometimes we didn't. We'd run in and out, run across the stage in different areas. It was just a big mess, and it was quite satisfying. It was really the most satisfying work I think I've done. I loved it.

And then, like I mentioned, I started performing in places where I could get on and off the stage. Once in a while I still played clubs. I did something at The Cinematic that my friend Joseph Brooks was doing stuff at. I did some shows at Club Fuck. I did some shows in little places where I knew the people and I wasn't going to have any grief. I just don't want grief from people anymore. I don't want anybody like yelling at me about making a mess. I don't want anybody getting me in any kind of trouble. I want to be able to go in, set up, be prepared, do the show, clean up and go home. I just don't want any kind of anything, and that's why I changed. I changed that way, and it was easier than clubs in many ways, but my shows got bigger and bigger and became more complicated in terms of moving them and setting them up and tearing them down and hauling everything. A lot of physical work, not to mention the actual physical work on stage, the actual exertion that it requires to perform. Yeah, I definitely started doing less and less shows.

Big Mess was always kind of an offshoot of what I was already doing, of what Stephen was already doing, and what Tom was doing. It was something to do when we felt like doing it. It wasn't any kind of organized thing now. It was just fun to do and something that we really, really enjoyed doing. My own shows were much more work. They were just much more work, much more responsibility for me.

I was fortunate enough to witness Ablutions of a Nefarious Nature at Track 16. You completely blew the audience away. It was so over the top, so blissfully colorful, so psychedelically alive. How much effort and time went into producing a show of that nature?

I was working on that show for pretty much for a year. But I still have a job; I still have my life. I have a life now. I didn't really have a life when I was playing clubs. But I had a lot more energy then. When you're younger you can just do so much more. You just have energy. One thing just moves you to another thing, and when you're younger, of course, it's much easier to get more of an entourage of people who want to come to the show, so they come and help out.

Where do you store things like that big, giant hammer? Or was it a hand? It was a hammer, right?

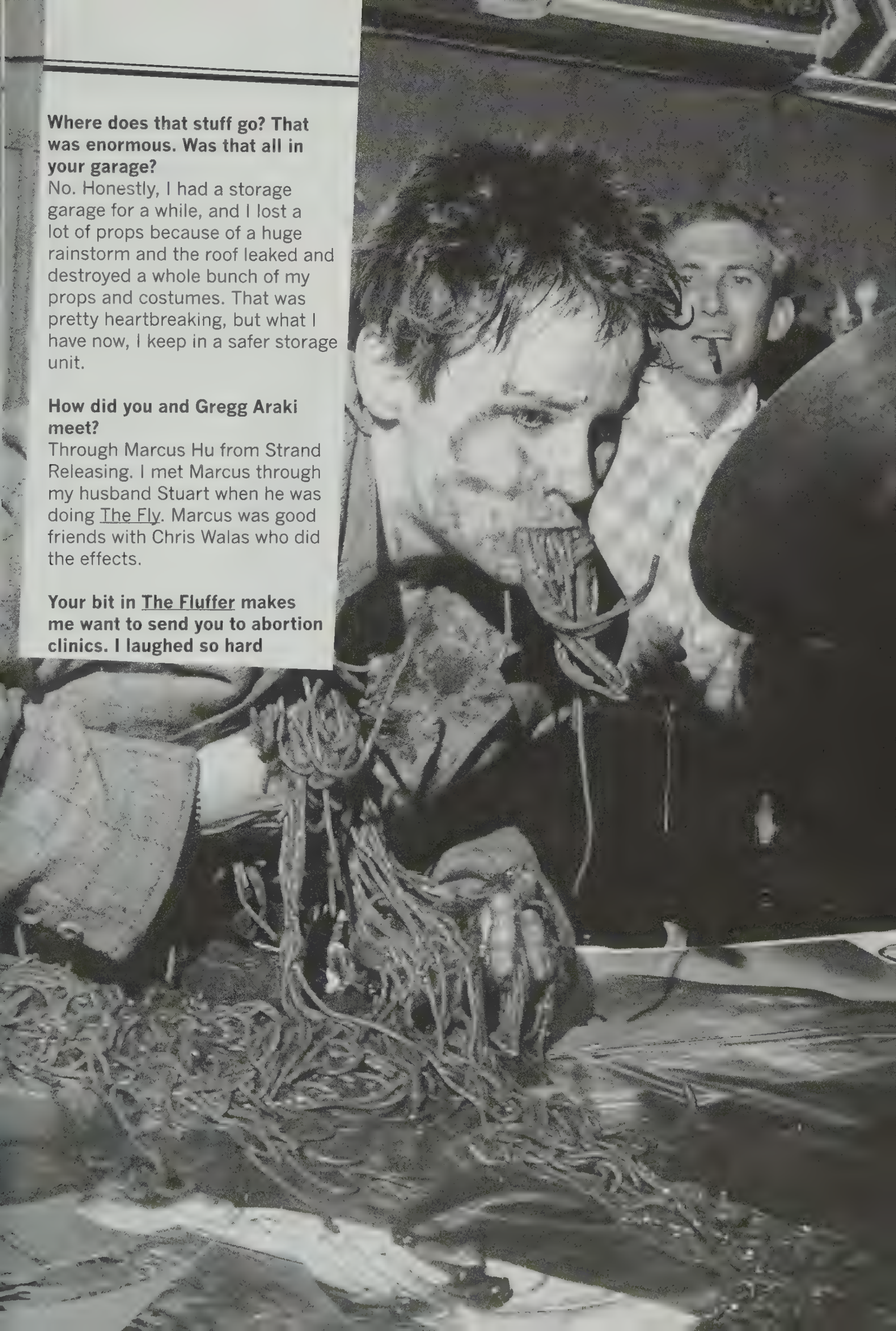
I have a hand, and I have hammers.

Johanna at the Hong Kong Café. Photo Scott Lindgren.

Where does that stuff go? That was enormous. Was that all in your garage?
No. Honestly, I had a storage garage for a while, and I lost a lot of props because of a huge rainstorm and the roof leaked and destroyed a whole bunch of my props and costumes. That was pretty heartbreaking, but what I have now, I keep in a safer storage unit.

How did you and Gregg Araki meet?
Through Marcus Hu from Strand Releasing. I met Marcus through my husband Stuart when he was doing The Fly. Marcus was good friends with Chris Walas who did the effects.

Your bit in The Fluffer makes me want to send you to abortion clinics. I laughed so hard



watching that. Gregg gave you that one bit where you're standing there screaming. That was on the corner of Virgil and Santa Monica, and there was a huge sign above me. It's always fun working with Gregg.

Amazingly, a number of your performances were recorded, and we have a Club Years DVD, so we can see a lot of these performances. You also did video work with underground filmmaker Shirley Clarke. Shirley and I met at UCLA. One of her students wanted to film a piece of me performing, and I don't know whatever happened to it. Every time I see the guy he says, "No, no, I gave you the only copy." I'm going, "Right. Okay." I don't have a copy of it, but I did a performance in a studio at UCLA for one of her film students, and Shirley was there with her dog, and right away we started talking. We just became really good friends. She was an amazing person for me to be around. We did two pieces together, two short videos, and one of them was just in the studio, and then another was like a performance. One was a piece that we put together, a piece for the video to work so she could work with me and show me what she liked or what she didn't like, how to work with video, essentially.

She was a great, great mentor and a really close friend. I loved her so much. Just an amazing person, so many stories, and I met Ornette Coleman with her and that was just great. She was so wonderful. Her daughter, Wendy, was a videographer too, and she did some great pieces.

Johanna performing 'Ablutions of a Nefarious Nature' at Track 16, Los Angeles, May 2007. Photo Shade Rupe.

You also did a performance piece with filmmaker Liliana Greenfield-Sanders. Right, that was my Grey Gardens. It was called Last Spring at Grey Gardens, and it was a crazy space, this great space that a friend of mine, Lauren Hartman, had at this gallery space at the 18th Street Complex in Santa Monica, and she asked me to come and perform. This was the second piece that I did there. I'd done one a year earlier that was called Soiled Bedding. We set up an installation with all the props and costumes and people walked through the space, and there were performers all through the space, and they walked around in a circle, through our performance space, which was like our home. There was a curtain up, and they'd walk around the corner, and then they would walk back through, and people would kind of come and go like a line into the performance, and it was constant, and it was around a two-hour performance. It was long.

And then we did Last Spring at Grey Gardens, and that was also a two-hour piece. It was more the idea of Lauren, who was interested in time-based work. Originally we talked about just living in the space, but then we decided that was going to be too much. So, we built the gardens. We built everything. We put everything in there. We built the whole installation, and then we did the performance, and we pretty much just started and just kept performing until we were done.

Did you also interact with people when they would walk through?
Sure. We'd talk to them and whatever. We just kept going. When Lili came to stay at my house, she'd never seen Grey Gardens, and I showed it to her, and she became obsessed with it. She later went on to make a documentary, Ghosts of Grey Gardens. Then she went on to NYU Film School and stuff. I don't imagine she'll ever do another performance. That's probably the only performance from Lili Greenfield-Sanders you'll ever see, but she actually was quite brilliant. I personally feel that her film was much better than the Grey Gardens that was on television recently on HBO.

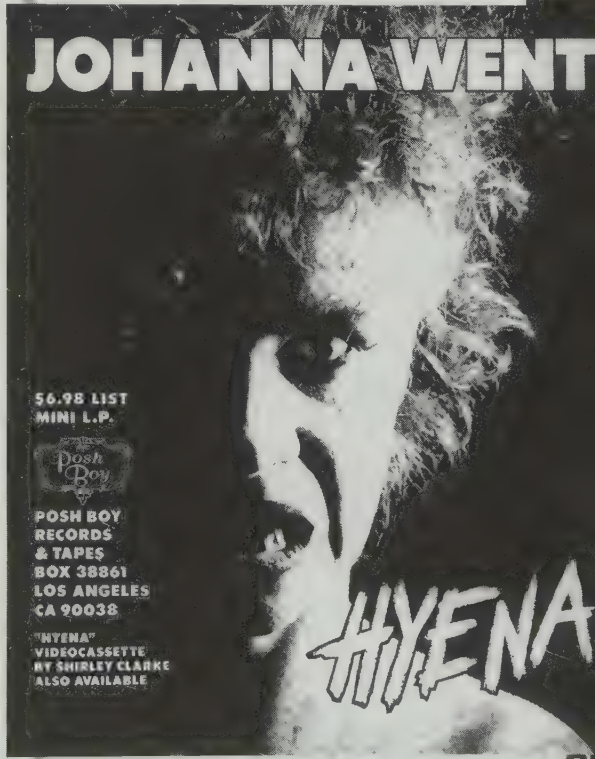
You guys were reaching much closer to what the experience of being the Beales might've been.
I think what we were doing was actually tapping into the spirit of how we both felt after becoming so obsessed. When I broke my leg in 1990, Grey Gardens was one of the things that I watched over and over again because it was the only thing, for some reason, that gave me some solace because I was laid up for so long and I kept watching it. It's so brilliant and so touching. I think that many people would look at my Last Spring at Grey Gardens and say that has nothing to do with the actual film or the actual people or the actual house, but in my mind, it's like that moment in time is what inspired the work.

I don't mimic other people. I go into my own self, and I bring out whatever that inspiration brings up for me. So, it's more about me and who I am and what I see and my own vision, and if it is a copy of something that was already done.

What sort of work are you doing today?
Well, right now I've been working on some sculptural pieces, smaller pieces, and I've been sorting through a lot of my stuff, my archives and my photos. I did a show a year ago at Long Beach State College in their gallery. I was part of a show with Skip Arnold. He's a fascinating artist.

I was a part of that show, and I've been talking about showing some of my costumes. Sometimes galleries ask to have pieces. Every day I move forward a little bit with the archives, but a lot of my tapes and things I've been trying to transfer, just to save them.

I've also seen you make like small animals and such out of yarn. Where are those ending up?
You know, they're still here at my house. I look at them and play with them and work on that. That's the kind of thing I'm doing actually. I'm not sure where it's going to go.
[BARK!]
I need to go feed my dog.

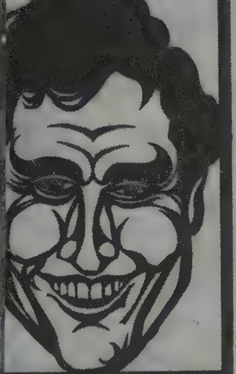


Yeah, I should let you go feed your dog.
I need to feed the dog, and then I need to feed the husband.

This has been wonderful.
My pleasure.

Bye.
[BARK!]
That was Stuart that time.

"I felt a certain obligation towards finding material that somehow reflected my psychological interests."



unexercised body. "Ah — that's better. Good thing I can handle the stuff. Bad for the old voice-box in the morning though. Tendency to belch, too."

"He's at it again. Never leaves the stuff alone. No wonder he's slipping. Those interviews of his. Sounds like an old English nanny." She looked at herself in the

one consolation. Wo
risk telling her I'm r
again tomorrow
That young model,
head. Definitely loo
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Why should I be?
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rang the agency, ta
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in touch with her –
maybe —?"
Now she was by
and they stood fac
other over the
though saying Grac
was too late for
even if he could
down by the bed.
"Ready?" she as

Often in life, no matter the decade, there's at least one person who stands out bolder than the rest. That person is often notoriously faithful to stepping well outside the mainstream while also not living fully outside pop culture. With River's Edge a new icon was born in the persona of Crispin Glover, an actor whose roles, at times, seem to be identifying extensions of his own self.

CRISPIN GLOVER

Ascending quickly in the Hollywood canon, Crispin chose to pursue all manner of creative art from book-making, record-making, and his own filmmaking, in addition to continually birthing new cinematic characterizations throughout his career, using the finance created from corporate ventures to support his own productions.

Through fortuitous circumstances I was at the New York premiere of What is it?, the Spanish premiere of It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE., and Crispin's triumphant return to the Capitol Theater in Olympia, where he first held his first Big Slide Show, and a serendipitous meeting at the Sundance film festival for the U.S. premiere of Gaspar Noe's Enter the Void. Ladies, gentlemen, and everything in-between I present the great artist and auteur, Crispin Hellion Glover.

Previous page: Crispin Glover as Dueling Demi-God Auteur in *What is it?* Images unless noted courtesy Volcanic Eruptions.

E PEOPLE TALK FOR
VING

ntinued from page 17)

l by the bed, and vain-
e tried to touch his
his stomach wrinkling
heavy ploughs of con-
ation. "Keep the body
e slag heap, old boy.
because people can't
ou there's no reason to
seed." Not wasting a
ent, he read the after-
newspaper that lay on
floor during his down-
movements. "Hope
come up with more of
drug addicts. Keep me
for months that lot
— plus the rehabilita-

e woman now began
ing on her hands with
n from a plastic bubble.
y if you're like *them*.
on and laugh every
ing. Harder if you're
onsible. It's difficult to
ally say something in
society without being
responsible for it. Sub-
here? No. It would lose
s." And she rubbed sav-
, almost sexually, at
ingers.
gave up his exercises.
lost count. "Wonder
LSD is really like?
t help. Could talk with-
thinking then. Just go
nd ramble. Ah, could
abit forming though.
you have to watch that
these things." And he
ed another bottle of
h.
e floated across the
, pink chenille, quilted
delicate to the ankles,
Mary Queen of Scots.
, those people were
ry this morning. I do so
these wretched crea-

earplugs and went

et lost?
ever! with
regory's
32nd Edition of the
NEY STREET
ECTORY
FIRST RELEAS
OFFICIAL
P.M.G. POSTC
- Exact definitio
Postal District
their postcode nu
- Up-to-date, comp
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board and plastic
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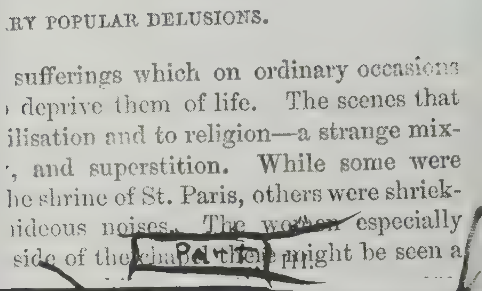

RY POPULAR DELUSIONS.

sufferings which on ordinary occasions
deprive them of life. The scenes that
ilisation and to religion—a strange mix-
, and superstition. While some were
he shrine of St. Paris, others were shriek-
hideous noises. The women especially
side of the chapel there might be seen a

SHADE RUPE: You were born in New York in 64. When did you move to Los Angeles?

nd of an

CRISPIN GLOVER: I lived in New York from 64-67. My mother, father, and I moved to L.A. in 67 because my father was getting more acting work there. My initial memories of life are of New York City. I visit there a lot. It was a definite shift in perspective once we were in L.A. so I quite vividly remember very specific things about New York of that time. I can remember clothing styles and the red lettering on the shop signs and the trees in the park and the apartment we lived in and seeing my father shot off the back of a jeep in an episode of Rat Patrol and the numeral '5' on the television station and a Christmas party where Ed Sullivan was playing and more. Even though I spend more time in L.A. and the Czech Republic, I visit New York a lot and think of New York as my home city. I would like to have an apartment there at some time.

Your dad has such a cool career from Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster and Who Killed Teddy Bear to Diamonds are Forever and appearing in your own film It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. When did you first realize your father's talents? Did his career then influence your own choices to become an actor?

I knew that acting would be a good career for me at about age eleven

THE MAGNETISERS.
273

or twelve. It was my concept and something I wanted to pursue as a career. It was a realistic career decision as opposed to a dream. I had grown up seeing how the business worked for my father and decided it was something I could do. When I told my parents it was something I wanted to do, they were supportive. I got an agent when I was thirteen and a Coca-Cola commercial came not too long after. I was not able to shoot on the day of the commercial because I had the stomach flu. I almost never get the stomach flu and I was very disappointed. I wanted to do the commercial but I was really ill. So my first job where I actually performed was when I was fourteen in The Sound of Music at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in L.A., and The Orpheum Theater in San Francisco. That was in 78 so I have been acting professionally now for thirty-two years. I did not work that much 'til I turned eighteen and the child labor laws started working in my favor.

You also have created some memorable roles for yourself from Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter to River's Edge to Twister to Wild at Heart. Were these roles you were pursuing, or did they come to you?

My career to date has been four chapters, from my point of view. From age thirteen to seventeen I worked in whatever I could and that included TV commercials. From seventeen to twenty I stopped doing TV commercials and then TV altogether. I was twenty when I did Back to the Future. After that film came out and was such a commercial success I felt a certain obligation towards finding material that somehow reflected my psychological interests. The first film I acted in after Back to the Future came out was River's Edge. I am still proud of River's Edge.

Previous page: Crispin Glover as Layne in *River's Edge*.
This page: Feck (Dennis Hopper) greets Layne in *River's Edge*.

Subsequent to that many of the films that I acted in did not necessarily reflect my psychological interests and they did not necessarily make that much money and that was not necessarily that good for my acting career. I specifically started funding my own films with the money I make from the films I act in when Steven C. Stewart's lung collapsed in the year 2000. This was around the same time that the first Charlie's Angels film was offered to me. I realized I could put the money I would make from that film straight into the Steven C. Stewart film. That is exactly what happened. I finished acting in Charlie's Angels and then went to Salt Lake City where Steven C. Stewart lived. I met with Steve, and David Brothers, with whom I codirected the film. I went back to L.A. and acted in a low-budget film for about five weeks while David Brothers started building the sets. Then I went straight back to Salt Lake City and we completed shooting the film within about six months in three separate smaller productions. Then Steve died within a month after we finished shooting.

Bruce Glover in *It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE.* Courtesy Volcanic Eruptions.

I am relieved to have gotten this film finally completed because ever since I read the screenplay in 87 I knew I had to produce the film and also to produce it correctly. I would not have felt right about myself if I had not gotten Steve's film made, I would have felt that I had done something wrong and that I had actually done a bad thing. So I am greatly relieved to have completed it especially since I am very pleased with how well the film has turned out. We shot It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. while I was still completing What is it? And this is partly why What is it? took a long time to complete. I am very proud of the film as I am of What is it? I feel It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. will probably be the best film I will have anything to do with in my entire career.

People who are interested in when I will be touring with the films should join up on the email list at my website as they will be emailed with information as to where I will be with whatever film I tour with. It is by far the best way to know how to see the films.

You have a very memorable moment in Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter with a great bit of choreography. Did you create those movements yourself on set? You also had a great death scene!
Yes, I did that dance to Back In Black by AC/DC.

Of course your role as Marty McFly's dad [in Back to the Future] is internationally recognized. Would you care to discuss the situation where portions of your performance were used for the sequel?
I have to be careful about that because there are legal terms that must be stuck with. Even though it is true that Steven Spielberg was part of the lawsuit it should be made clear that the creative impetus for utilizing another

fall back upon; and he therefore expressed his opinion against ad-actor in prosthetics to make that actor look like me and inter-splicing small portions of my performance from the original film in order to fool audiences into believing I was in the sequel likely came less from the mind of Steven Spielberg and more from the mind of the writer Bob Gale.

Rubin & Ed is one of your more memorable roles. How much of that character was created by you, from behavior to dialog to wardrobe choices?

The behavior and wardrobe were my choices and the dialog was by the director/writer of the film.

19

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without him. Upon this,
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ern Isnik, he was inter-

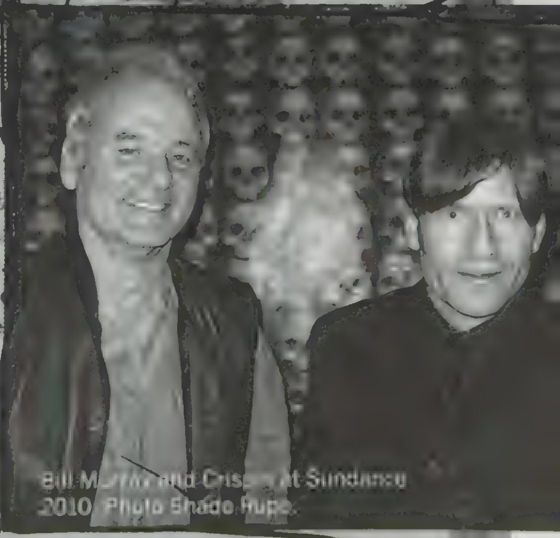
ISNIK.

You appeared on David Letterman for publicity for River's Edge, yet you appeared in similar dress, and possible character, to Rubin. Did you feel at the time that creating the character on David's show was the best way to promote River's Edge or were you more interested in just having some fun?

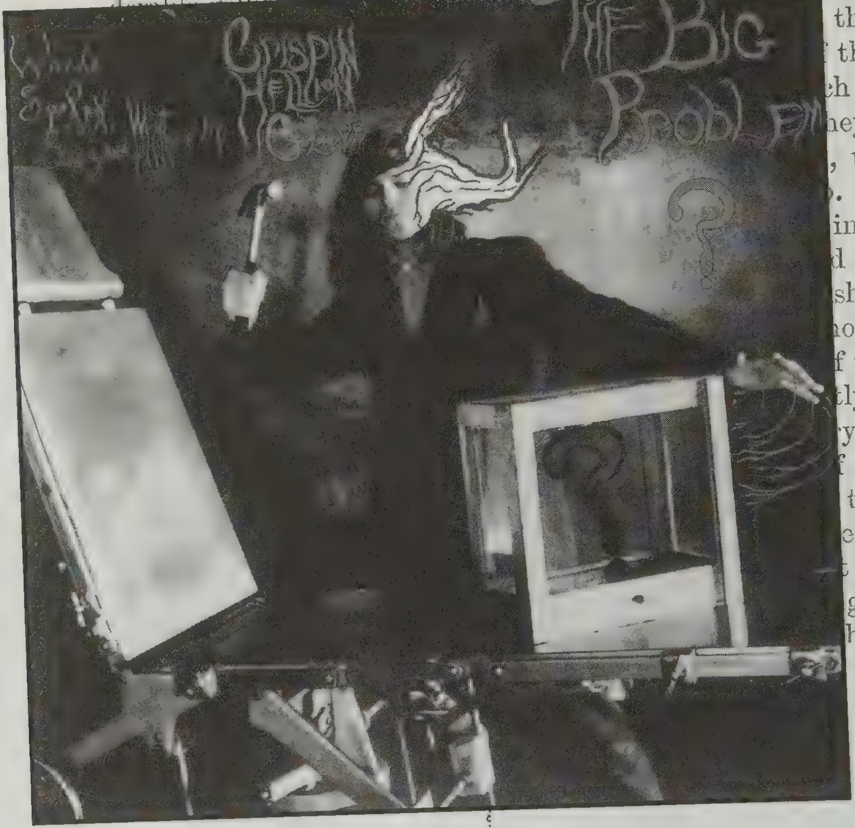
I am careful in media to state that I do not confirm nor deny that I appeared on the David Letterman show having anything to do with that character. But the fact of it is the Letterman appearance you are referring to occurred during the week that River's Edge

time to save them from destruction. The Tur

VOL. II. 22



Bill Murray and Crispin at Sundance 2010. Photo Shade Rupe.



came out in theaters. Rubin & Ed was not made for another several years after that.

In the late 80s you demonstrated your songwriting with The Big Problem ≠ The Solution. The Solution = Let It Be., which also included shots of those famous pants and shoes. And of course you also covered Michael Jackson's song Ben during your work on Willard. Does musicality seem a form of expression that you may return to? The record's just lovely.

Thank you for the compliment. Barnes & Barnes wanted to record with me and approached me around 87. I knew their work and thought it would be a lark to record something with them. I recorded some things and then they let me know they were interested in making an album. It became apparent to me that a concept should be had and so I thought about some of what had been recorded and realized there already was a bit of a theme and that by recording other new things and getting rid of some of the things that were already recorded a good concept could come out of it. This is where The Big Problem ≠ The Solution. The Solution = Let It Be. came from. It took over two years to complete.

There is another album's worth of material that needs some small finishes before it can be released. My mind is mostly on making and distributing my films and acting in others' films. One of my favorite parts of making the films is figuring out the music for the films. Performing music is much lower on my priorities. I do not consider myself a musician. The music on that album was performed by Barnes & Barnes. I wrote the lyrics to the original songs and had influence in the sound. I often chose pre-existing music to read the books over. Nonetheless I had a huge amount of influence on the entire concept behind the album. I am proud of the

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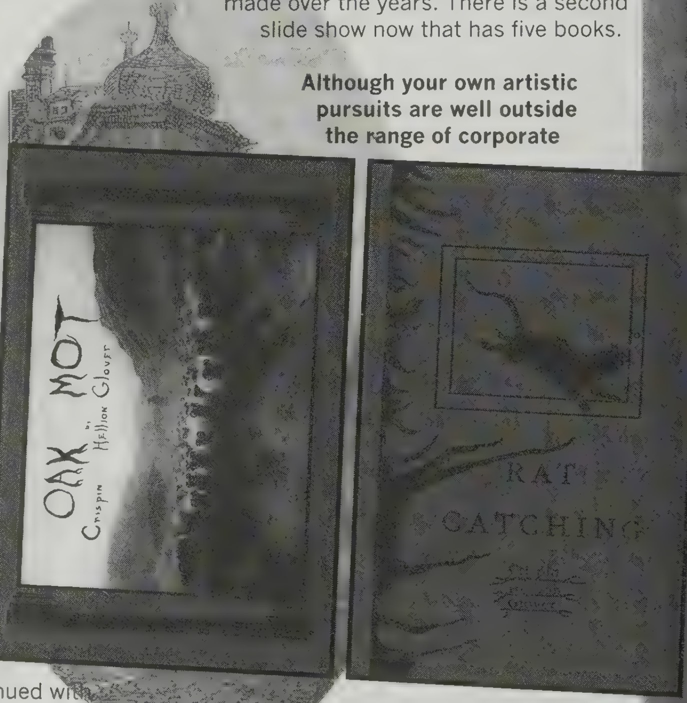
The Big Problem ≠ The Solution. The Solution = Let It Be. Album produced by Barnes & Barnes.

Crispin and friends in *Willard*.

album and I need to put the second one out at some point.

Rat Catching and Oak Mot have always felt like truer avenues of expression than your corporate film roles. Your tours and talks also reflect personal expression. When did you start working on the books?
I published my first book Rat Catching in 87. I started making my books in 82 for my own enjoyment without the concept of publishing them. I had always written and drawn and the books came as an outgrowth of that. I was in an acting class in 82 and down the block was an art gallery that had a book store upstairs. In the book store there was a book for sale that was made up of an old binding taken from the 1800s and someone had put their own artwork inside the binding. I thought this was a good idea and set out to do the same thing. I worked a lot with India ink at the time and was using the India ink on the original pages to make various art pieces. I had always liked words in art and left some of the words on one of the pages. I did this again a few pages later and then when I turned the pages I noticed that a story started to naturally form and so I continued with this. When I was finished with the book I was pleased with the results and kept making more of them. I made most of the books in the 80s and very early 90s.



When did you first decide to incorporate the books into performance slide shows?
The books are taken from old books from the 1800s that have been changed into different books from what they originally were. They are heavily illustrated with original drawings and reworked images and photographs. When I first started publishing the books in 87 people said I should have book readings. But the books are so heavily illustrated, and the way the illustrations are used within the books they help to tell the story, so the only way for the books to make sense was to have visual representations of the images along with the readings. This is why I knew a slide show was necessary. It took a while but in 92 I started performing what I call Crispin Hellion Glover's Big Slide Show. People get confused as to what that is so now I always let it be known that it is a one-hour dramatic narration of eight different books that I have made over the years. There is a second slide show now that has five books.

Although your own artistic pursuits are well outside the range of corporate media, you continue to turn in such fine standout performances in commercial films. Do you enjoy these roles even though they're created inside a more traditional storytelling structure?
Just to be clear I am very supportive of 'hero's journey' story structure and I would consider both of my own films to subscribe to that sort of structure. A lot of the differentiation of my own films from corporately-funded-and-distributed films is content. Realizing my need to act in corporately-funded-and-distributed films in order to fund my own films has increased my gratitude to being in those films. I often

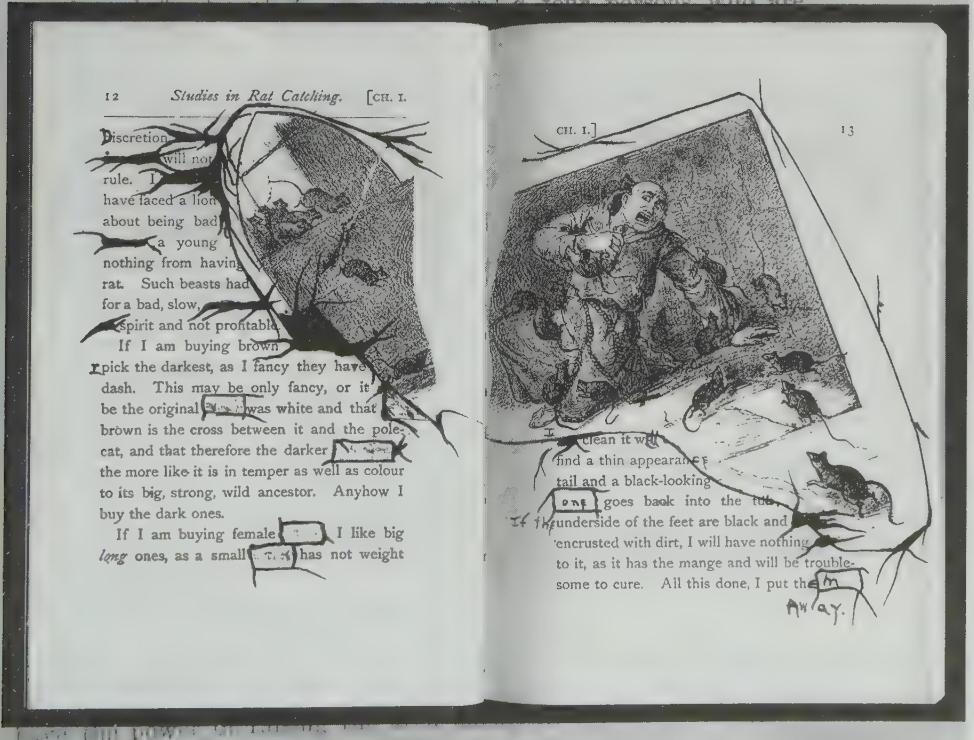
enjoy being in the films more now because my reason for being in them has shifted. As described above I had financed part two of the trilogy It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. with the money I made from the first Charlie's Angels film.

After Charlie's Angels came out it did very well financially and was good for my acting career. I started getting better roles that also paid better and I could continue using that money to finance my films that I am so truly passionate about. I have been able to divorce myself from the content of the films that I act in and look at acting as a craft that I am using to help other filmmakers to accomplish what it is that they want to do. Usually filmmakers have hired me because there is something they have felt would be interesting to accomplish with using me in their film, and usually I can try to do something interesting as an actor. If for some reason the director is not truly interested in doing something that I personally find interesting with the character then I may console myself that with the money I am making to be in their production I can help to fund my own films that I am so truly passionate about. Usually though I feel as though I am able to get something across as an actor that I feel good about. It has worked out well!

Now that you're also a director yourself, can you name a few of your favorite directors and films?

Werner Herzog, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Luis Buñuel, Stanley Kubrick, Tod Browning, F. W. Murnau, Fritz Lang, Akira Kurosawa, Frank Wisbar, Milos Forman, Roman Polanski, Federico Fellini, David Lynch, John Waters, Russ Meyer, Karel Zeman, Abbas Kiarostami, Wong Kar Wai, Gaspar Noé, Orson Welles, John Cassavetes, Dennis Hopper, Timothy Carey, and many more. My favorite film lists go in to the hundreds and there are a lot of my very favorite films that are just one-offs where the director only made one film that I like. Many of the above

number of children on the list is horrible to think upon. The thir-



12 *Studies in Rat Catching.* [CH. I.

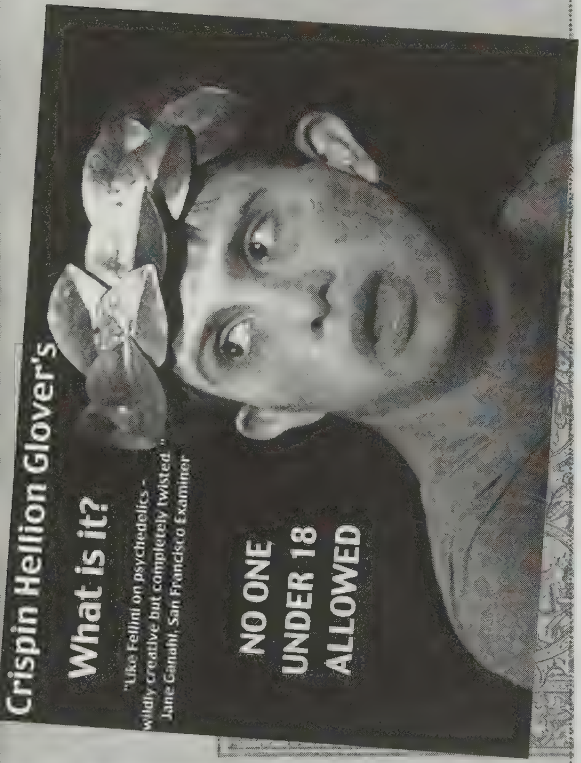
Discretion
will not
rule. I
have faced a lion
about being bad
a young
nothing from having
rat. Such beasts had
for a bad, slow,
spirit and not profitable
If I am buying brown
I pick the darkest, as I fancy they have
dash. This may be only fancy, or it
be the original was white and that
brown is the cross between it and the pole-
cat, and that therefore the darker
the more like it is in temper as well as colour
to its big, strong, wild ancestor. Anyhow I
buy the dark ones.
If I am buying female I like big
long ones, as a small has not weight

CH. I.] 13

I clean it will
find a thin appearance
tail and a black-looking
one goes back into the tub.
If the underside of the feet are black and
encrusted with dirt, I will have nothing
to it, as it has the mange and will be trouble-
some to cure. All this done, I put them
Away.

VOL. II.

A section of *Rat Catching* by Crispin Hellion Glover.


Crispin Hellion Glover's
What is it?
"Like Fellini on psychedelics - wildly creative but completely twisted." - Jane Ganahl, San Francisco Examiner
NO ONE UNDER 18 ALLOWED

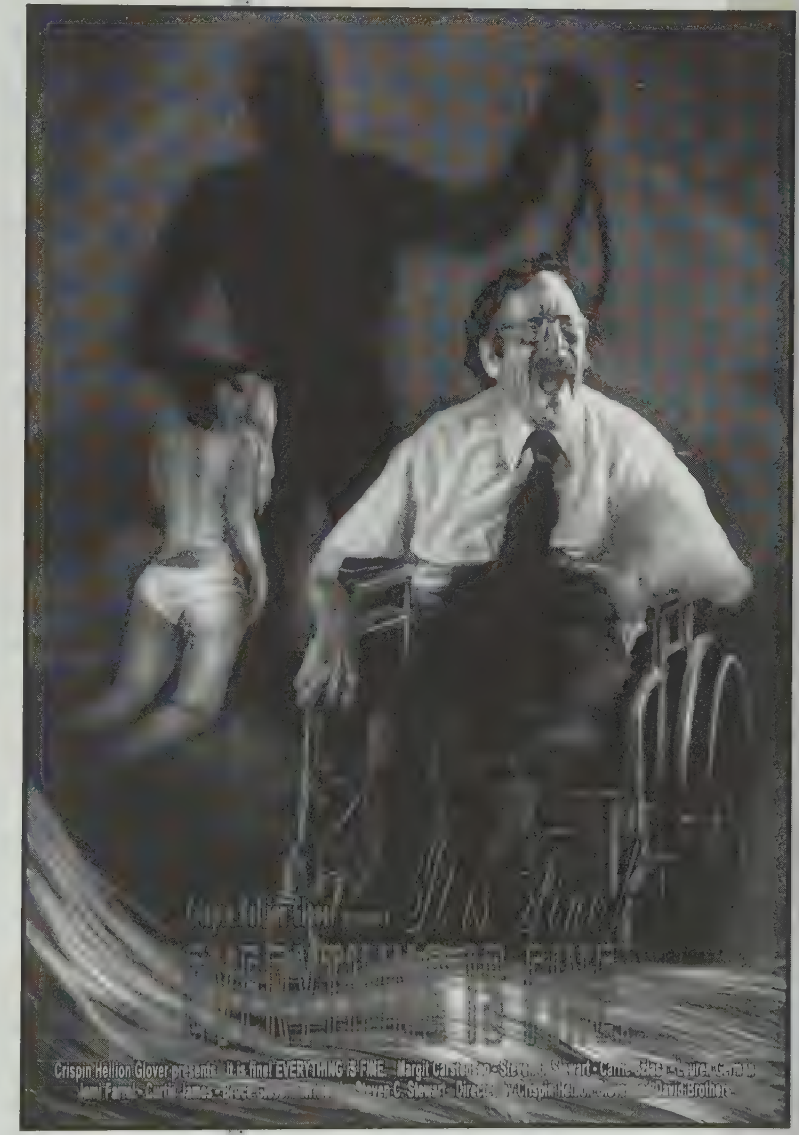
directors have made multiple films that I admire.

The rumors about your first feature, What is it?, were rampant. The first rumblings were a story featuring Down's syndrome children pouring salt on snails. When did you first begin creating the film and how did its final construction come about? Did you always have an idea of what you would be doing or did the film grow organically as you created it over a period of time?

Actually, there are no children in What is it? All of the actors in the film are adults. Many times people with Down's syndrome are erroneously called kids. All of the actors with Down's syndrome in the film are adults. The film started production as a short film in 96. It took nine-and-a-half years from the first day of shooting on the short film to having a 35mm print of the feature film. I wrote it as a short film originally to promote the viability of having a majority of the characters that do not necessarily have Down's syndrome to be played by actors with Down's syndrome.

The way this came about was this. In 96 I was approached by two young writers and aspiring filmmakers who were from Phoenix to act in a film they wanted to produce and direct. They made a monetary offer to my agents which they really should not have done as they did not actually have financing. Nonetheless it did get me to read the screenplay, which I found to be interesting. I found interesting things about the screenplay and was interested in the project, but I thought there were things about it that did not work. I came up with solutions that required a reworking of the screenplay and I told them I would be interested in acting in the film if I directed it. They came to L.A. and met with me and wanted to know my thoughts. There were quite a few things I was interested in but the main thing was that most of the characters were to be played by actors with Down's syndrome. They were fine with this concept and I started rewriting the screenplay. David Lynch then agreed to executive produce the film for me to direct. This was very helpful and I went to one of the larger corporate entities in Los Angeles that finances films and met with them. They were interested in the project but after a number of meetings and conversations they let me know that the were concerned about financing a project wherein most of the characters were played by actors with Down's syndrome. The title of this screenplay at this point had become IT IS MINE. and will become part three of the "IT" trilogy. It was not known yet at this time that there would be a trilogy but it was decided that I should write a short screenplay to help promote that the concept of having a film with a majority of the characters played by actors with Down's syndrome was a viable thing for corporate entities to invest in.

This is when I wrote a short screenplay entitled What is it? We shot this short screenplay in four days. I edited that over a period of six months and the first edit came in at eighty-four minutes. The final feature-length film of What is it? is seventy-two minutes. So the first version of the short film is longer than the final version of the feature film, and it was too long for the material I had at the time, but I could see with more work and more material I could turn it into a feature film. Over approximately the next two years I shot eight more days and edited this in to what is now the final version of the film. I locked the edit of the film about three years after the first day of shooting what was supposed to be a short film. Then there were a number of years of very frustrating technical problems that mainly had to do with SMPTE time code. Originally I was going to make the film the now old-fashioned way of a complete photochemical process and not digital intermediate. An optical house in New York did not give me enough information to let me know that the SMPTE time code had not been properly put on when the film was telecined. During this time I worked patiently on the final sound edit of the film with a number of interns. Finally that sound edit was finished and it became apparent that the optical house was not telling me the truth. Prices had fallen during this time so I was able to make the film using a digital intermediate to ultimately go out to a 35mm print of the film. So from the first day of shooting what was to be a short film to having a 35mm print for the film took nine-and a half-years.


Crispin Hellion Glover presents It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE.

Promotional postcard for *It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE.*

Sometimes people ask me if the length of time it took for me to make the film had to do with working with actors with Down's syndrome. This was not the case. Even though the film took many years to make much of the delays were due to technical issues. What is it? was actually shot in a total of twelve days which was spread over several

It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. Courtesy Volcanic Eruptions.

years. Twelve days is actually a very short amount of shooting days for a feature film. The most important thing about working with an actor whether they have Down's syndrome or not is if they have enthusiasm. Everyone I worked with had incredible enthusiasm so they were all great to work with.

I definitely have been aware of the element of utilizing the fact that I am known from work in the corporate media I have done in the last twenty-five years or so. This is something I rely on for when I go on tour with my films. It lets me go to various places and have the local media cover the fact that I will be performing a one-hour live dramatic narration of eight different books which are profusely illustrated and projected as I go through them, then show either What is it?, being seventy-two minutes, or It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE.,being seventy-four minutes. Then having a Q&A and then a book signing. As I funded the films I knew that this is how I would recoup my investment, even if it a slow process.

The Q&A session with the audience after the film screening has become an extremely important part of the show—particularly after showing What is it? What is it? deals with many taboo elements and audiences can have very strong questions after the film and it is important to not explain the film to people in terms of symbols and meaning, but it is important to put the film in context of what it is reacting to and let people know that this is not just an exercise in something random, but there are specific reasons why what is being reacted to with these films is important.

You also feature Feral House publisher Adam Parfrey in a role as a blackfaced minstrel. How did your friendship come about and what was it like to work with Adam as an actor?

CRISPIN GLOVER

I believe I met Adam in 88. He had requested an illustration for an early Feral House imprint of Torture and Torment of Christian Martyrs. We actually met outside the Amok Book Store by coincidence. We have certain things in common, like both having fathers as actors in the business and growing up in what I would describe socioeconomically as middle class. We also both happened to publish books, although that is Adam's main business and for me it is a side business.

What is it? is such a striking work. My first experience was at the New York Underground Film Festival and the response was all over the map. I saw the film as a miraculous mélange of Crispin Glover's interests and fantasies and objects of fascination. In case I'm missing the point, do you feel you were able to accomplish what you wanted with the film in terms of personal expression, any 'message' or 'point' you were hoping the audience would learn, and also expansion of yourself as an artist?

I make it quite clear that What is it? is not a film about Down's syndrome but my psychological reaction to the corporate restraints that have happened in the last twenty to thirty years in filmmaking. Specifically anything that can possibly make an audience uncomfortable is necessarily excised or the film will not be corporately funded or distributed. This is damaging to the culture because it is the very moment when an audience member sits back in their chair, looks up at the screen, and thinks to themselves: "Is this right what I am watching? Is this wrong what I am watching? Should I be here? Should the filmmaker have made this? What is it?" and that is the title of the film. What is it that is taboo in the culture? What does it mean that taboo has been ubiquitously excised in this culture's media? What does it mean to the culture when it does not properly process taboo in its media? It is a bad thing when questions are not being asked because when these kinds of questions arise are when people are having a truly educational experience. For the culture to not be able to ask questions leads towards a non educational experience and that is what is happening in this culture. This stupefies this culture and that is, of course, a bad thing. So What is it? is a direct reaction to the contents of this culture's media. I would like for people to think for themselves.

The early poster for What is it? is striking. You are referring to the Shirley Temple-like image poster. I do not actually use that poster image as an advertisement although it is the ideal poster in my mind's eye. That image was pre-existing and I wrote it into the screenplay as a character of sorts. I purchased the original image which is not signed by the painter so I own the copyright to that image.

What is it? also features the introduction of your friend Steven C. Stewart. How did you and Steven meet and how did your collaboration begin?

Crispin and Paz de la Huerta at Sundance 2010. Photo Shade Rupe.

cutting off their heads. Wiser, too, than the popes and bishops of a

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When I was nineteen I was acting in a film made at the AFI called The Orkly Kid. The character I was playing was based on a person the director had made a documentary about when he was working on a television show in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was friends with another filmmaker from Salt Lake City named Larry Roberts who had made a documentary on Steve when he was still not able to get out of the nursing home. When Steve got out of the nursing home he told Larry that he wanted to make a movie. Larry was an interesting filmmaker, but was older and doing other things and he introduced Steve to another younger Salt Lake City filmmaker, David Brothers, who was making unusual movies and said maybe they could work on it together. I had also been shown some of David Brothers' films by Larry and the director of The Orkly Kid. It was around this time that I had been wanting to make a movie from one of my books and I had very much liked David Brothers' movies he was making on video. So I met up with David Brothers and we started making a movie of one of my books called The Backward Swing. We started shooting this on video in 87. Actually this will be the next movie I edit together as the 'IT' films took over. In any case while we were working on The Backward Swing David showed me the script for It is fine! and as soon as I read it I knew it was a movie I had to produce.

It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. is a remarkable adventure in storytelling and is almost a departure from your previous film in its sense of design, structure, narrative, and performance. What were some of the factors in your filmmaking decisions for your second film with Steven C. Stewart?
The two films are definitely very different from one another. Steven C. Stewart's own true story was fascinating and then the beautiful somewhat naïve screenplay he wrote including his fascination with women with long hair, graphic violence and sexuality, and the revealing truth of his psyche were

Steven C. Stewart and friend in *It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE.*

all combined. There was a specific marriage proposal scene in the film. That was the scene I remember reading that made me say "I have to produce this film."

It's unusual for an actor with a disability to be portraying the villain and this was very important to Steve and integral to the entire project. The way Steve wrote the screenplay is extremely effective and the emotional catharsis for the audience with his character is quite excellent.

David Brothers seems a fantastic designer and a perfect corealizator for It is fine! How did you two meet and did you both work closely together to create the colorful and dynamic set pieces for the film?
The most expensive part of making this film were the sets. I had worked with David physically building the sets for The Backward Swing and knew what kind of design he was capable of from a very large set he created for What is it? There were specific discussions we had about colors and types of sets, but I also knew David knew what he was doing with set design so I trusted him about many things. The sets are a huge part of what I am proud of about the film in many ways and definitely in that they support the emotional content very well.

A very welcome surprise is seeing your father in the film. I would assume you remain close as father and son and possibly as performer and creator. What was it like working with your talented and iconic father?
He was very easy to work with as an actor to direct. I am now working with him on the screenplay for the first film I will make at my property in the Czech Republic for he and myself to act in together. He and I have never acted together before.

Another enjoyable performance is the marvelous Margit Carstensen. How did

Feral House publisher Adam Parfrey as the minstrel, and [below] being led in *What is it?* Courtesy Volcanic Eruptions.

you decide on Ms. Carstensen as an actress in your film? I would think it must have been nothing short of thrilling directing one of the great Rainer Werner Fassbinder's actresses in your own movie.
Margit Carstensen was great to work with and a great person. I did ask her questions about how Fassbinder worked with her. She told me that he really did not direct her. I could tell that she was not saying this to be left alone but that it was accurate. I could also see why when I watched her perform her scenes. I took the same stance as Fassbinder in that she was so perfectly prepared and every level was there already so it would be pointless to say anything to try to improve it. The only things I did with her was to put her in the proper places for the camera. I remember once she was trying to figure if she should stand or kneel in a scene when talking with Steve and it seemed logical that she should do both. There really was not a lot of direction other than that. I realized that Steve had written this as a melodrama in many ways. Fassbinder often worked in a melodrama format and I knew Margit would be able to bring the kind of grounded truthfulness that one experiences watching one of her films with Fassbinder to Steve's particular writing style. I remember sitting watching her play the scenes and feeling like I was watching a Fassbinder film. It was remarkable because it sounds from what Margit told me that this is what he did. He just let her work. I am certain he did not do that with all of his actors, but it was obvious he knew what he was doing with actors and when it was right to interfere and when it was right to let things be. With her it is right to let her work and you shoot it and it's correct! She is very pleasant.

Interestingly she was not who I was initially thinking of for the role. In the film you can see there is a certain kind of casting of perfectly beautiful women and the sets, although beautiful, are built in such a way that it is understood they are sets. Because Steve wrote it as a fantasy David and I wanted to make certain that we supported it in the most opulent way and to look closest to a corporately funded and distributed film. I had initially thought of the role to be played by a well-known perfectly beautiful actress that had done a lot of television work in the 70s and 80s. I had met her in the mid-80s. I spoke with her about the screenplay and I could tell she was uncomfortable that there was graphic sexuality in it.

So I started to rethink it. I was watching a lot of Fassbinder and thought I really should approach one of the greatest living actresses: Margit Carstensen. I got hold of her through the Goethe Institut in L.A. They got hold of her agent in Germany and I sent her the script and she liked it immediately. I flew her to Salt Lake City for the shoot for one week. I am proud to say that it was her first American film!

Steven C. Stewart turns in a remarkable and defining performance in his swan song role in It is fine! I feel that Steven's dream expressed in the film is one that is shared by most men who enjoy the company of women, and maybe even more so by handicapped men who have less of a chance to interact with women in such intimate fashion. Was he able to see his dream projected before his passing?
Steve really liked acting. In many ways Steve is more of a natural born actor than I am. I decided to become an actor as a business decision at a young age. I do not mean to say I do not enjoy it, as I do, but I know it is because I was around the business and understood how it worked more than someone who just enjoys the attention. Steve definitely liked the attention and the women with long hair! But there also was something true that was being expressed and he somehow knew instinctively what to do. He had questions about his own acting skill at a certain point because he knew good actors were being brought in to the production. There were various things about his physical condition that evoked other elements that he was not necessarily aware of and I explained the exacting reasons for this and he seemed to understand. His acting is excellent in the film and he of course had written this fantasy for himself to play out so no matter what there is a documentation of this man living his fantasy, but his performance works extremely effectively on a dramatic/organic level as well. The thing I am happiest about is that the emotional element that was there

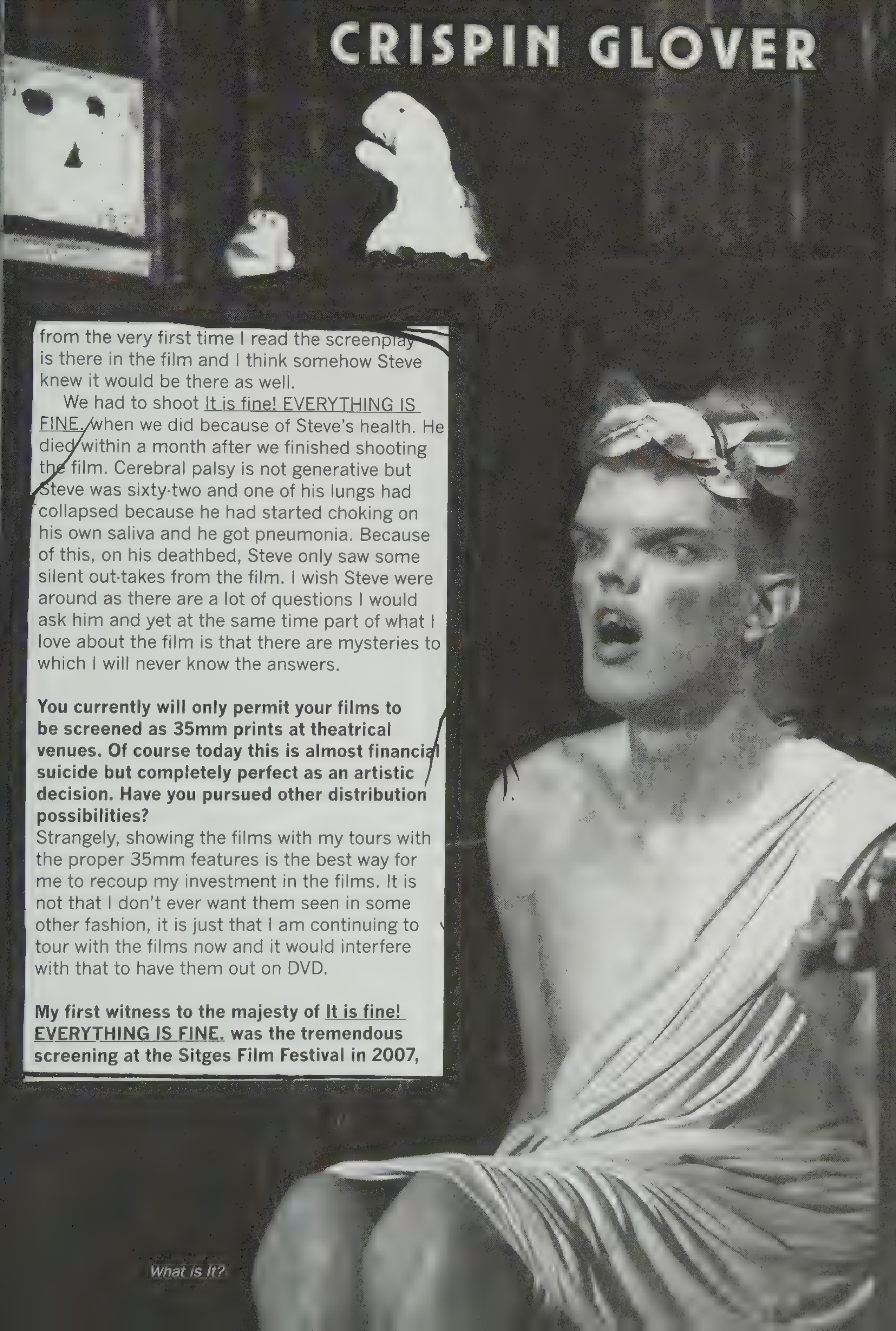
from the very first time I read the screenplay is there in the film and I think somehow Steve knew it would be there as well.

We had to shoot It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. when we did because of Steve's health. He died within a month after we finished shooting the film. Cerebral palsy is not generative but Steve was sixty-two and one of his lungs had collapsed because he had started choking on his own saliva and he got pneumonia. Because of this, on his deathbed, Steve only saw some silent out-takes from the film. I wish Steve were around as there are a lot of questions I would ask him and yet at the same time part of what I love about the film is that there are mysteries to which I will never know the answers.

You currently will only permit your films to be screened as 35mm prints at theatrical venues. Of course today this is almost financial suicide but completely perfect as an artistic decision. Have you pursued other distribution possibilities?

Strangely, showing the films with my tours with the proper 35mm features is the best way for me to recoup my investment in the films. It is not that I don't ever want them seen in some other fashion, it is just that I am continuing to tour with the films now and it would interfere with that to have them out on DVD.

My first witness to the majesty of It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. was the tremendous screening at the Sitges Film Festival in 2007,



What is It?

where you won a New Visions award special mention. It's long been announced that these films would constitute a trilogy. What is the status of completing the work as a triad at this time?
The audience and festival directors and staff were great in Sitges and I was honored to get awards for both What is it? and It is fine! there. I should not go into detail for IT IS MINE yet. I will not shoot that next. There are other projects outside of the trilogy that I will shoot next. I own property in the Czech Republic and am making a small soundstage out there to continue making my own films. It is another culture and another language and I need to build up to making complex productions like What is it? and the existing sequel It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. there. IT IS MINE is an even more complex project than those two films were so it will be a while yet for that production.

Crispin as Dueling Demi-God Auteur/The Young Man's Inner Psyche and Id in *What is it?* Courtesy Volcanic Eruptions.

At Sundance 2010 we were both fortunate enough to witness the U.S. premiere of the full-length version of Gaspar Noé's masterwork Enter the Void and afterwards we were both reeling from the neuronal assault of the film. What other films of recent times have affected you somehow?
Yes, that was a very exciting premiere. Gaspar said to me it was the first time the 35mm print of the film was screened and it of course is an astonishing piece of work. It is very rare that I enjoy contemporary film on that level. I've noticed that when I have gone to Sundance I have only gone to films where I know the filmmaker or someone in the cast. In this case I know Paz de la Huerta, who is excellent in the film, and I had met Gaspar before at Sundance and complimented him on Irreversible. I was very glad to be one of the first people to talk to him after the screening. I was also glad to talk to him a bit over the next couple of days. His film has not left my mind. When I premiered What is it? in Sundance in 2005, Werner Herzog premiered Grizzly Man. I had known him a bit before having met him at the Venice Film festival in 93. I had also been a part of asking questions to Herzog on the Anchor Bay DVD releases for Fata Morgana and Even Dwarves Started Small, both of which have strong influences on What is it? in different ways. I went to the premiere of Grizzly Man and Herzog came to the premier for What is it? He was incredibly supportive at the premiere and after as well and it has meant a lot to me. So all of that experience was tremendous. David Lynch has also been supportive in a different way and I am grateful for that as well.

You are an author, a recording artist, a performer, and a film director. Do you find yourself adhering to one particular form of creative expression at this time or do you feel your own evolution will continue to grow in multiple media?
My favorite is making films, but as I said before I am very glad to participate as an actor in others' films. Sometimes some very good things come out of that sort of work. I will work in various media as it is necessary.

Any parting words?
Yes. People can find out when I am going to tour where with what film on CrispinGlover.com. Thank you for the excellent questions and your enthusiasm.

Thanks, Crispin!

[REVIEWS]

BOOKS

LUCIO FULCI: BEYOND THE GATES
A Tribute To The Maestro

by Chas. Balun

Blackest Heart Books

☐ A brilliant hoary spark left us, o my brothers, March 16, 1996, as Maestro Lucio Fulci took his leave from human realms, leaving behind an amazing amassment of celluloid records of the extreme in shock, thrills, tension, and gore.

Despite Fulci's prolific career his films scarcely received any notice from American film texts for years. Two maggot-dripping, brain-drilling *Fangoria* magazine covers (#8 *Zombie*; #28 *Gates of Hell*) provided the necessary encouragement for entry into Yank soil. Except for the release of *Zombie*, *The Beyond*, *The House By The Cemetery* and the almost-kinda release of *Gates of Hell*, the films of Lucio Fulci have been mostly overlooked by even horror fans themselves, only able to find bottom-shelf video store copies of the cut, murky versions of these films, if at all.

This situation continues today as mainstream film texts avoid mention of one of Italy's premier horror filmmakers, so much so that Polish-born Kieslowski's death on the same day completely overshadowed almost any mention of Fulci's passing. Thanks to a few strong souls who have taken their fan appreciation of Fulci's work to production level we have not only Fantasy Film Memory's beautiful volume on Fulci in their Directed By series on Fulci, we also have this glorious Tribute to the Grandmaster of Gore by the main trumpeter of the man's career stateside, Chas. Balun, entitling his eulogy *Lucio Fulci: Beyond the Gates—A Tribute to the Maestro.*

Now, if anyone knows zombies and their feeding habits, it's Chas. Balun. Knows 'em likes the worms in his gut. Chas.' appreciation for Fulci was and is unbounded, resulting in many photos and articles and rants throughout his years as the creator and REDitor of *Deep Red* magazine. No one else had the information, the stills, or even the movies. If a spiritual godson/parent relationship existed, it would be the one between Chas. Balun and Lucio Fulci.

And that strong, binding thread ties a big, pretty bow around this compact volume of love and admiration for one of cinema's strongest lights into the darkness. This book is such a delirious strokefest of gornographic freak rants, describing every last drop of blood and grue with such delicious detail, that it has got to make you squirm in your seat with the wetness approaching from your own goregasms. You almost want to have every Fulci flick playing at once to accompany the reading of this tribute, to enhance the high holiness of the text itself.

From the inclusion of an introduction by Fulci's daughter Antonella, to Shawn Smith's oozing re-creation of his entry into Fulci's meaty world, to Tom Rainone's glorious appraisal of his dinner with Fulci, through Chas.' gushing text and topped off with Massimo Lavagnini's final words, *Lucio Fulci: Beyond the Gates—A Tribute to the Maestro*, is a grand compilation of the words that would be needed if we all could've attended the final ceremony for our dear Comrade of Carnage.

Oh, and did I forget that the book contains over sixty stills, lobby cards, movie posters and a special section from Fulci's personal collection of set photographs including an awe-inspiring snapshot of a young Fulci embraced by The Great Man Mario Bava?

If you already know about Fulci, or if you are ready to get your feet, and your mind, wet, Chas.' latest addition to the field of gorology will forever be the Holy Text of Remembrance and Observation.

As Chas. would say, *Amen, bro'*!

THE EXORCIST

by Mark Kermode
BFI Modern Classics

☐ Mark Kermode, *Exorcist* expert extraordinaire, has expanded on his previous articles for *Video Watchdog*, for this short book from the British Film Institute. Although not an entirely 'complete' study on *The Exorcist*, Mark really gets to show his enthusiasm for the film, his own findings, and provide additional information not before included in treatises on the film.

Leaving out segments of his research on the so-called 'subliminals' of the film, and a vast amount of rare stills, including additional appearances of Captain Howdy in a television spot for the film, Mark instead concentrates on a step-by-step examination of the film. Tracing its history from Blatty's investigation of a 1949 Mount Rainier, Maryland case, where a fourteen-year-old boy exhibited bizarre behavior that led to his 'exorcism' by Father Raymond J. Bishop and Father William S. Bowdern, Mr. Kermode examines author and screenwriter William Peter Blatty's intentions for the film, and William Friedkin's alternative directions, causing the film to lose some power and some sense, according to Blatty.

The background information on the actual 'possession' case that inspired Blatty has not been collected or mentioned in as full detail as it is here. Neither have Blatty's protestations with Friedkin's decisions been so fully explored. Some of the deletions of material filmed and included in Friedkin's original, and unreleased, 140-minute cut, add much to our own understanding of the film's events.

Also explored is the infamous 'missing' spider-walk sequence, where Reagan wanders down the stairs on all fours *backwards*, of which only a tantalizing still exists. Both special effects man Marcel Vercoutere and actress Linda Blair conflict each other with their recollections, and also lets us know that no matter how much 'missing' material there is, the film is as of this writing twenty-five-years-old and unless recordings and/or letters of conversations are found, the many decisions behind cut scenes and shot material may never be told in full.

Exquisite reproductions of many stills, including a still-by-still dissection of the nightmare sequence where we get our fullest, clearest look at Captain Howdy, grace this publication.

Complete it is not, as a tome of that sort would have to include author Mark Kermode and Tim Lucas' findings in *Video Watchdog* No. 6, the Friedkin interview from *Castle of Frankenstein* No. 22, Blatty's original screenplay and notes from *On The Exorcist: From Novel To Film*, and the many behind-the-scenes stills and promotional material for the film. The best advice is to pick up as much of the above material as you can, but since most of it is out of print, Mark Kermode's *The Exorcist* is a well-researched record of the making of one of the twentieth-century's most notorious films.

MÜTTER MUSEUM

Blast Books

☐ After several years of art directing and producing the popular Mütter Museum calendar, Laura Lindgren, publisher of Blast Books, has constructed a beautiful tome, simply entitled *Mütter Museum*. We are newly treated with brilliant interpretations of the world of the pathological sciences through the magic of the Mütter Museum of the College of the Physicians of Philadelphia with this gorgeous book, a testament to the amazing and dedicated work of Gretchen Worden, who popularized and cared for the Museum for many years.

The Mütter Museum was founded when Dr. Thomas Dent Mütter, expressing his wish to found a museum "to serve at once the cause of science and humanity," offered his unique collection of anatomic and pathological specimens to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia in 1856. The agreement was signed in 1858, and with additional acquisitions joining Dr. Mütter's original collection, the Museum has amassed one of the finest and most fascinating collections demonstrating the history of medicine. In *Mütter Museum* a group of esteemed photographers reflect on the art inherent in the study of medical science, revealing the fine craftwork involved in the creation and preservation of the specimens.

This phenomenal collection of fine-art medical photography includes several artists known from the Mütter Museum calendars: New York artist Arne Svenson's striking photographs of dermatological wax models; Scott Lindgren's sharp lens captures a meticulously detailed model of the severed head of a Chinese man; Rosamond Purcell's dreamy pathoscapes, which feature her photographic juxtaposition of a twelve-week-old foetus and a preserved lower jaw, and an image of pins and needles retrieved from the body of a hysterical woman; Olivia Parker's capturing of a dried child's skeleton; and a phenomenological *mise en scène* by Joel-Peter Witkin. For this reviewer special note must be made of the work of Max Aguilera-Hellweg. While each artist demonstrates unique talents in revealing the viewpoints of the scientist, the artist, and the spectator, the psychopathos of Hellweg's works stretches the definitions of the museum's pieces into the realm of epiphenomena. This artist's extremely fine work has been collected in the exquisite, ultra-vivid photography book *The Sacred Heart: An Atlas of the Body Seen Through Invasive Surgery*.

The dream of Dr. Thomas Dent Mütter to enlighten and educate is very much alive and well in the Mütter Museum book. Gretchen Worden's lively, informative text illustrates its own brilliant energy, a testament to an amazing woman whose work and passion have helped create a space for all of us to learn, explore, challenge ourselves, and grow.

THE RUNNING MAN

by Stephen King
Ténèbres
(French language)

❑ Long tagged as the King of Horror, Stephen King has aptly displayed his descriptive talents in many literary genres from social critique to romance to science-fiction. Two of his science-fiction novels were marketed under his Richard Bachman pseudonym and both involve a futuristic game where America is the greedy, blood-lusting audience, rooting for the kill. And in both, America is posited as the reason these games exist. And in both a single protagonist, operating under a personal moral code inside a society of madness, finds triumph and failure.

Ben Richards is the financially impoverished American everyman who is not only more intelligent, but also more aware of his social situation than everyone around him. Ben's wry sense of humor engenders a wan smile on the reader's lips, with his casual criticisms of his surrounding world. Ben enters the Games, broadcast throughout the country on Free-Vee, as his only hope of the income needed for his wife and daughter. Although a doomed enterprise, to his knowledge, his passion for the safety of his mate and child is stronger than his wife's own interest in herself, or his pride, selling her body for a few bucks for food and medicine. The Games themselves reflect this desperation of the working class (Treadmill to Bucks reflects all working peoples' daily grind) and of course exploit this as an alternative reflection to America at large.

Richards' test scores at the Games Building propel him to the most popular of the Games, The Running Man. $100 a day for every day he stays alive, with a much larger prize if he outwits the Hunters, which to date no one has done. He enters the Games Building from the street, and exits to the street, back out into the hell he came from. As he lays his feet back onto pavement though, he isn't only noticing signs offering various pornographic perversions, his wary eyes catch men standing around on corners too long, reading newspapers too long, men who may be his opponents in this game, along with the rest of America, as citizens are paid for reporting sightings of the gameplayer. And not only are his observations of his social setting altered by the mentality of his paranoia, he becomes the main attraction himself, converting from voyeur to exhibitionist, though remaining as hidden as possible in both instances.

Quite prescient in its description of future televised games, *The Running Man* echoes modern America's fascination with watching others suffer. From Japan's *Endurance* series, where people put themselves through the most painful activities to get a few bucks, and laughs, to the popularity of *Survivor* and the constant cameras on the participants in *Big Brother*, *The Running Man* and *The Long Walk* do not seem out of the ordinary at all. This is where both novels succeed as attraction for the reader. Ben Richards is any reader. Ben Richards is any man. Though the success of Mr. Richards is his own downfall, the tearing down of even one segment of the bloody carnage that is the frustrated mindset of the American working class is a mighty legacy to leave for the subsumed man.

SLIMETIME
A Guide to Sleazy, Mindless Movies

by Steve Puchalski
Headpress

❑ As the foremost maven of trash cinema, Steve Puchalski has been leading a path through the dark and smeary bootleg world for years now with his ultra-informative *Shock Cinema* magazine. Before Steve took on his current publishing project, he trod the waters of videotape overkill with his underground zine *Slimetime*. For years these small-circulation issues were sought after by voracious fans, seeking ever higher thrills, excitement, and guidance through all the lower-shelf crap in the video stores of planet Earth. Now Headpress has collected all the issues of *Slimetime* in this thick volume, and even alphabetized Steve's entries, providing an easy chart for traveling the murky depths of fuzzy visuals, biker babes, cheesy flicks, and other vomitous dreck.

Foregoing the short plot synopsis of most of his contemporaries, Steve details not only the events of each film but his own reactions, which depend on whatever brand of alcohol or other substance he happened to be imbibing the evening, morning, or afternoon that he chose to take the place of usual human activities. His excursions into post-celluloid visions carry the reader through a heavy overdose of visual atrocities and offer insights into Steve's own observations of our social milieu from past to present.

Quite informative and intelligent—despite case after case of brew—sometimes the reviews themselves are better than the pictures he discusses. If you want to shave several ninety-minute sessions out of your life and get down to the real dirt that you really want to see, Steve Puchalski's *Slimetime* provides necessary cartography into uncharted terrain, forming the most exhaustive collection of one man's obsession with 'bad' movies than ever before accomplished. If you haven't seen *Slimetime*, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

IMMORAL TALES

by Cathal Tohill & Pete Tombs

Titan Books

❑ Messrs. Tohill and Tombs have created an absolutely essential text for deciphering all those re-titled and poorly dubbed European sex and horror films that have plagued many a bottom shelf in the video stores for years. Not only do we know what those movies *really* are but we're also introduced to many titles that, so far, are not even available through bootleg sources. For lovers of sex and horror this tome opens up an entirely new field of viewing pleasure.

Until now we've only had the obsessive scribblings of video junkies to provide any sort of guide for all those wonderful titles that glare at us, most likely from the bottom shelves, if at all. Luckily, the editors of *Immoral Tales* have done an amazing amount of research, finding the original and alternate titles for these films. Many of the reviews of schlock cinema found at the video store have the films credited to the pseudonymous names rather than the actual creators. Now the public at large will know the cheesy-looking *Erotikill* directed by 'Jack P. Johnson' is actually Jess Franco's *The Bare Breasted Countess*. *Immoral Tales* is more than a guide; it's a map of the rich terrains of the filmmakers' conscious and unconscious desires.

It's this territory of the imagination that begins Messrs. Tohill and Tombs' examination of these films. Drawing on sources from the work of eighteenth-century artists like Goya to the nineteenth-century decadents and twentieth-century surrealists, they begin their task of charting the origin of the European sex/horror film, citing these movements as the genesis of these wild, sensation-ridden films. The early films that attempted to explore the dark dreams and fears of cinemagoers are discussed, leading up to Georges Franju's 1956 classic *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (*Eyes without a Face*), that with its revitalization of the macabre traditions was the film that broke out the groundwork for the *fantastique* films to follow in its path.

The writers then take us on a tour of the filmmaking practices in *fantastique* film in Europe through the four countries discussed: Italy, Germany, France and Spain. Overviews of the horror and sex output from these countries is followed by film reviews of outstanding or exemplary titles and additional information on each film and its relevance to the progression, or regression, of *fantastique* films.

The next 200 pages cover broad periods of filmmaking history in six chapters, each concentrating on a filmmaker of particular interest to the sex/horror enthusiast. Jess Franco's output is examined in full detail followed by a complete listing of his films and the many alternate titles for each. This chapter is filled with the authors' personal musings on Franco's films and what they could possibly mean. Certain of Franco's films are fairly straightforward, like *El Conde Drácula* (*Bram Stoker's Count Dracula*), or may contain violent, necrophiliac streaks like the Klaus Kinski-starrer *Jack the Ripper.* But when you get into the territory of films like *Les Avaleuses* (*The Bare Breasted Countess*)—where Franco did not have the financial resources to create a full-fledged 'feature'—you have to wonder whether he is an artist or a fraud or just insane at these points in his career. Five minutes of staring at Lina Romay's opening and closing muff makes one think of the 'art' films of Andy Warhol and early pre-porn 'beaver' flicks. Franco's artistic merit is questioned and discussed throughout the chapter, in addition to constant mentions of his love for jazz and its use in his films.

French filmmaker Jean Rollin is next and the events leading up to his first vampire films are detailed. Again, the research and hypotheses are invaluable, attributing the 'success' of Rollin's *Le viol du vampire* to the wave of near-revolution that was happening in Paris during May 1968 when the film was released, allowing room for better attended screenings due to the fact that only two films opened in Paris that week. Four other filmmakers are profiled: José Larraz, José Bénazéraf (whose chapter also includes a short interview), Walerian Borowczyk and Alain Robbe-Grillet.

The structure of the book moves from thoughts on the beginnings of *fantastique* imagery to early horror films to the 'cinematic time bomb' of Franco's *Gritos en la Noche* (*The Awful Dr. Orlof*) with its strong images of nudity mixed with horror, a landmark appearing as early as 1962, and moves through the sex/horror directors and on to the more sexualized and fetishistic imagery of Walerian Borowczyk and Alain Robbe-Grillet, whose films besides the classic *Last Year At Marienbad* (as screenwriter only) are near impossible to find on videotape. A small chapter on the comic-book pulps that quite often have influence on the works of these filmmakers ends the book.

Immoral Tales is the most extensive work ever on the subject of European sex and horror films. Many fanzines and prozines have attempted to document the trend with various reviews and articles but this is the one most definitely worth acquiring, if only for the more than 200 illustrations alone, including a beautiful sixteen-page color section. The only problem I had at all with the book is that with this much information it would've been much nicer to have a more complete index. Several of the illustrations (like a blonde babe caressing a six-foot-tall penis) sent me scurrying to the back of the book to find more info on the film, only to find that the only listing was for the illustration itself. After reading the whole book the film is only mentioned once, in one sentence. Besides a few mistaken identities of actresses in photos and the like, I can most definitely highly recommend this valuable book for any all fans of 'good trash.'

LAZY

by Peter Sotos

Creation Books

❑ *NOTHING CAN DULL THE LIGHT WITHIN*

This is pornography. Pornography is so, so very much more than cocks and cunts, cum and piss, top and bottom. Pornography is what you make of it. The term actually means 'to write about prostitutes,' from the French *porne* meaning prostitute and the Greek *pernanai*, to sell, both apt countries of origin, no?

Peter Sotos writes about prostitution. But not just the saggy, pockmarked, alcohol and drug-scarred face asking you if you've got five dollars for a date. Prostitution's definition extends to include debasement. Peter Sotos enjoys this much more than the exchange of money for a quick cum. This debasement is fine, acceptable, but not enough.

A mother and father in Denver make up their sweet little nubbin for a contest. All pretty curls and lipsticked face. She's not a little girl anymore. She's a whore. Presented, sold, contested, competed against. How do they judge? Most cute, best smile? Or is it the little bit of cotton that mama shoved into her little darling's drawers to extend the pudenda, hoping that extra spin to the Janet Jackson song will catch the judge's eye and bring in the points.

Did JonBenét Ramsey ever lipsync to Like A Virgin?

This child is no longer a child. The child has been dragged down to the sick level of the parents, something they wish to avoid discussing. It's perfectly harmless. It's just a show. For kids.

Like the parent who photographs their nude children and sends them to the lab. Like leaving your child to that strange uncle for an evening out on the town. He's family after all.

Like the cries and besobbed moans on the television and women's issues shelves. The exposed, exploited, told and sold pain of all those sad, lost souls. How convenient. How perfect. How purchased. How pre-packaged. How sold.

Lazy is Peter's most remarkable work to date. His forceful eye has moved to the glory hole booths and suckhouses of the homosexual, *neé* bisexual and married. His encounters with the betrothed, the short-cocked, the uncut, the droopy, the drippy, the liars, the cheats, the fucked, the dead. Exchanging disease with a new buddy, a new pal, someone who understands what this is, what they're here for. What Peter hopes for.

Why Does A Straight Man Visit Adult Bookstores?

"Not even bisexual."

Anyone who debases themselves is up on the market. Anyone who changes their behavior for another. Anyone who trades dignity and head held high for that quick cum. That jag off. That special secret moment on the way home from work. That show. That exploitation. This is the pornography of Peter Sotos. Complete with as many cocks, cunts, dugs, bushes, cums, many more than most people would have in a lifetime, that you would expect of pornography.

MOMMY AND SARAH SAD WITH BRUISES. DAD HAPPY & RELIEVED AFTER HITTING THEM.

A pervert friend sends Peter photographs of a public mural in Manhattan. Paintings from abused, beaten children. He carries these photographs with him, at times. He carries their cries, their broken lives, their faith that moves mountains. It gets him hard. He wraps those tears, that damage, around his hard cock and comes for them. With them. Thanks, kid, you made my day.

Lazy's composition is exquisite. Juxtapozing, comparing and contrasting, commenting on various news clippings and reports on one page with his own text on the other, Peter fills in the gaps and holes, so to speak, in those sparse readings of text. In those terse journalisms of Murder Victims' Kin Have Their Say and Hers Was the Face of Girlhood, Full of Hope and Possibility. The reporter, to be so very kind and thoughtful, warning us in the next sentence: "The description of her dead body is hardly fit to print." Luckily the *Chicago Tribune* is of such quality and caliber it did print her next sentences. "In the polite version, she died of asphyxiation in a nest of weeds, with leaves and grass shoved up her nostrils and her underpants in her mouth." Thanks for the advance warning. I couldn't have put it better myself. Pull those punches and spare us the pain.

Give us the pain. We want the pain. Peter Sotos gives us the pain. His writing is a flashlight, low on batteries, diving into those missing spaces, those undefinitions, those pulled punches. Those lies. Those diversions. Those coat jackets over those crotches in the Bijou. In the Apple, the Midway, the Mini Adult. Those wedding rings dropped into pockets, the wallets left at the front desk for safety from all those new friends just waiting for you on their knees, wet from the previous proud papa of three's loveload. Thanks for sharing. Thanks for caring. Buddy. Friend. Pal. Thanks for understanding.

Peter Sotos is pornography. At its best.

WES CRAVEN'S LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT
The Making of a Cult Classic

by David A. Szulkin

FAB Press

❑ *Last House on the Left: The Making of a Cult Classic* is undoubtedly the most complete examination of a single film I have ever encountered. There have been excellent overviews of directors' careers, culling many images and interviews to further broaden our understanding and appreciation of a particular filmmaker, but never has one single film ever been so fully explored in such a thorough manner. From the first works of the filmmakers involved, to the inception of the project, its production, distribution, cult status, and the many versions that exist, *Last House on the Left: The Making of a Cult Classic* should serve as the blueprint for future explorations of a singular film.

Author David A. Szulkin has clearly done his homework. Opening his examination of director Wes Craven's first feature film with the full cast list and credits, including alternate titles for the film, he places a footnote at the bottom explaining how the film calls itself *The Last House on the Left*, but most press material and articles on the film leave off the article, hence his own dropping of '*The*' in the title. We know we're in for a microscopic frame-by-frame history and presentation of one of the most notorious films in theatrical history.

The infamous advertising campaign is given a complete chapter, researching the various retitlings of other films (Mario Bava's *Bay of Blood* became *Last*

House on the Left Part II) and other films using the repetition of the phrase 'It's Only a Movie!' or using it singularly as the poster for the equally infamous *Last House on Dead End Street*, which not only took advantage of its predecessor's title but also proclaims in type as large as the film's title: 'It's Only a Movie!'

Other chapters include exhaustive studies of the recording career of David Hess, creator of the instantly abhorrent Krug Stillo, even reproducing the cue sheets for *LHOTL* and bits of music that didn't make it into the film; a filmography of each actor in the film, more complete than this reviewer has ever read before; a section comparing the original shooting schedule to sound man Jim Hubbard's recording of the production, even reproducing a few pages from his notebook; the advertising campaign and the eventual banning of the film from a few countries under *LHOTL*'s different monikers such as *Krug & Co.*; current thoughts of the cast on the film they had made over twenty years before; and most excitingly, in the true fashion of a video watchdog, a full chapter exploring all known releases of the film and the various few seconds and minutes here and there showing that no 'complete' version of the film exists (color film stills are reproduced with the rarely seen KRUG carved in Mari's upper chest).

Thoroughly illustrated with hundreds of ad mats, film stills, notes, cues, and other material, with nice small 16mm size film stills placed in the lower corners in the chronological order of the film's events, *Last House on the Left: The Making of a Cult Classic*, is what every film fanatic wishes they could use in studying their favorite films. We can only hope that Mr. Szulkin's book finds itself in the hands of other working film biographers and influences their reportage.

David A. Szulkin's book is so complete, and written in such a non-fanatical way in its depiction of the history of this film, it seems apt to rewrite the catchphrase as "It's Only *THE* Movie."

Highly recommended.

FILMS

SALOME
1978, b&w, 18 mins
THE FORBIDDEN
1973-78, b&w, 35 mins
dir: Clive Barker
Redemption Video (1998)

☐ It's not often that film directors release their first explorations in film creation. Most of the time it's because they've moved in entirely different directions and they are almost embarrassed by their experiments. Oftentimes, though, these early films can provide inspiration for beginning filmmakers; after seeing early filmwork by now well-known directors they begin to realize that 'hey, my stuff isn't that bad.' With these two early experiments in the film medium (he was eighteen when *Salomé* was made). Clive Barker demonstrates that at this earlier point in his filmmaking life, before the machinations of Hollywood thwarted his goals, his ability to create a mood, invoke a response, tell a story in what he considered a new way were at hand.

Salomé takes a fairly simplified approach in enacting the classic tale by having Clive's friends glide about in a gothic setting and twirl around in robes in the darkness. If this wasn't given the title *Salomé*, you wouldn't know what else to call it. The closest thing to actually having anything to do with the story is the delivery of a freshly severed head to the laughing title temptress. On the way to this ending shot we are greeted to various shots of nude people holding torches, performing strange dances, and intertwining in somewhat orgiastic tableaus. The simple soundtrack is heightened during these later moments by sighs and breathing. The murky, dark grain of this most inexpensively shot film allows us to be drawn into Clive's telling of this classic story. It's not apparent if he actually wanted to tell the full story or not as he takes an extremely free rein in this portrayal, and it doesn't seem to have an actual beginning or end. Just soft, moody shots of the actors being spooky.

With *The Forbidden*, Clive takes more time in presenting his images, and in the process gets even artier. Taking the Faust tale into his own hands, the short begins with a grinning man in a mask, then follows the creation of some sort of painting and the man who continually looks upon the work—a bearded man locked in some sort of cell (portrayed by *Hellraiser* screenwriter Pete Atkins). Printed almost exclusively in negative, Clive's images take on an otherworldly flavor. The music, by Adrian Carson, adds an enormous amount of background and depth to these images, with deep, bassy rumbles dotted with light drumbeats and other percussion. This film deals at length with the area of the mind, concentrating on the man in the cell and his putting together of the pieces of a puzzle of an undefined design. Is it a map? Animated birds fly by outside the barred cell window. A man in a strange mask enters a room and disrobes. The bearded man gazes through the bars and remembers (dreams?) a sexual encounter with a woman. She takes a needle and makes marks in his chest, face and the rest of his body. Clive pops in for a few moments sporting a silver-painted face and a most-definitely blood-engorged penis, and poses and hops around in a frenetic dance; apparently some sort of demonic reference. Other hands join the woman's and they slice into the bearded man's flesh and peel his skin back and off. The man appears skinless, much like Frank in Hellraiser, and the pieces of the puzzle are blown away.

The duet is followed by interviews with Clive, Pete Atkins, and Doug Bradley. Clive says his earliest film influences were from underground films of the late 60s and 70s, by filmmakers like Kenneth Anger and Andy Warhol. Pete discusses how these early films were definite precursors to the trio's later work. Doug talks about the stage play of *Salomé*, which they later turned into the Super-8 film. All three testify to the creative forces that are constantly at work in no-budget filmmaking and the successes of their inventions.

BAMBOO HOUSE OF DOLLS

(aka Nu ji zhong ying)
dir: Chin Hung Kuei | 1974
(VHS bootleg)

☐ Oh, man! This is great! Definitely in the recommended category for fans of sadistic cinema, this production by Sir Run Run Shaw, who would later deliver *Blade Runner* to the screen, offers everything the title suggests. A concentration camp in China, circa 1943, is the setting for this over-the-top, action-filled women-in-prison flick. The filmmakers took full advantage of the exploitation possibilities with a mixed American Asian cast and a zillion babes in mortal bondage.

Japanese troops invade a local hospital unit looking for a fallen American pilot. When they are not given their answer, six of the patients are shot in front of their brethren. The Japs take the nurses hostage and back to their concentration camp. From the eye-grabbing camera work to the excellent music score orchestrated by Wang Fu-Ling, *Bamboo House of Dolls* is an absolute tickler.

A sadistic (of course) female warden orders a young Asian girl to lick her boots clean, with a nice tongue-against-leather close-up for openers. A girl is dragged out of an isolation cell and hung by the wrists in the prison yard. A shot from the doomed girl's nipple to the tight face of the warden is followed by the order, "Beat her to death!" Another inmate must hold the whip and beat the slowly stripped young woman into unconsciousness. She stops and is beaten herself until she resumes the brutal blows. She runs away and electrocutes herself on the hot fence, her mouth wide open in horror as her hand fuses with the wire. A few other prisoners are ordered to bury her. And this is only the first ten minutes!

On the road to their attempted escape we're treated to a great mess-hall catfight with legs thrown over tables, those great tight panty shots winking at us; the chosen instigators are treated individually to dancing on broken glass at swordpoint, sexual assault, and the forced entry of an American blonde by the warden, who wields one evil-looking strap-on. After a break-out and recapture the girls are first stretched in the hot sun with no water, then tortured for information to find the gold near the camp that the warden is searching for. Leg-breaking with board and brick and an electric table provide some fun.

Great camerawork, action scenes and brutality carry this film above the usual women-in-prison fare. Though *BHOD* would rate low on the gore score, the film earns a full-on eleven for great Eastern torture/sleaze fun.

TRANSGRESSION

dir: Michael DiPaolo | 1994
Black Cat Films (VHS)

☐ *Transgression* scared me a little in the beginning with what seemed the usual mix of underground iconography: bondage scenes, religious scenes, and death tableau all cut together to make a point about religion. Well, luckily after the first few minutes passed, I was able to enjoy a well-crafted tale in what seems three parts, the killer's deeds and the television reporter investigating him, the killer's identity revealed to us and his kidnapping of the reporter, and the reporter's dealing with the violent events she was put through.

The film opens on the reporter, Mary Selby (played by Molly Jackson) sitting in her jail cell, waiting to be executed for killing three men. 'I killed three men and found god,' she writes in her journal. She flashes back to an interview with Dr. Andre Zarem (Marc St. Camile) and his thoughts on who the killer of several prostitutes may be. His thoughts are intercut with the killer wearing a black mask and claiming his next victim. Throughout her recollections of the events leading to her arrest, the film also shows the killer at work, claiming victim after victim, in a remote cabin. The victims are most often bound to an x-frame and their throats slashed. DiPaolo's camera never shies from the killer's deeds, or from showing us his personal enjoyment of the blood of his victims. Sometimes the girls are wrapped in black plastic while the killer enjoys their last bit of life while rubbing against their near-corpse bodies.

The killer starts calling Mary at home and she becomes even more involved in his crimes. Her boyfriend, Detective Ron Reyes (Julio Rodriguez), behaves like a father to her, following her around and constantly telling her she's too involved. They bring a copy of a telephone message left by the killer to Dr. Andre Zarem for investigation. Mary becomes even more involved and the killer becomes so infatuated with her that he kidnaps her and forces her to watch his crimes. At one point, after witnessing his work, he ties another woman up and asks her, "Your call. Either I slash your face, or I kill her. Your call." Her vanity proves her undoing.

The last part of the film details Mary's absolute breakdown after her ordeal. She becomes an alcoholic which destroys her relationship with the detective, her already tenuous relationship with her mother, who she blames for her brother's suicide, and her dealings with men, who she feels she needs to tie up and torture. Which brings us to the present and her meeting with the electric chair.

Transgression is filled with some great bits and scenes and is very well shot and edited, which helps it overcome the inexperienced acting in the first two thirds. By the end of the film, DiPaolo pushes his actors into much finer performances, but by this time the film is almost pure drama. For a first feature on a meager budget DiPaolo delivers a pretty nice ninety minutes. If he takes as much time and care with his next project, we could have a new filmmaker to watch out for.

IMMORAL TALES

dir: Walerian Borowczyk | 1974
Anchor Bay Entertainment
(DVD, 2000)

❑ Ah, some first-class perversion from the outer lands. The first Walerian Borowczyk film to hit domestic DVD shores is a fine introduction to the ultra-fetishized, amoral world of this obscure director.

Featured in Pete Tombs and Tim Cahill's *Immoral Tales* book, Borowczyk has gained fame through bootlegs of titles like *The Beast* (where a woman is repeatedly pursued by an ape-like creature with a very large schwang) and *Dr. Jekyll and the Women* (with Udo Kier). Here he touches up themes that he's explored in other films, and each story is told with his signature finesse.

A parade of wonderful sex toys from the director's own collection opens *Immoral Tales* in a prologue from the Italian edition of the film, *I Racconti Immorali*. Little switches and levers cause dolls to masturbate or allow a heavy rutting to commence. Old photographs and drawings of sexual activity are displayed, along with a bone dildo and a gallstone collection. Walerian has quite the appetite for the wonders of the human body.

Immoral Tales is comprised of four tales, all of course dealing with sexual themes. The opening story, 'The Tide,' details the adventures of a young man whose cousin has come to visit: "My cousin Julie was sixteen and I twenty, an age difference rendering her subject to my will." He and his young cousin enjoy a 'lesson' on the beach as the young man recites information on tides and promises his cousin that: "I will flood into your mouth as the tide comes in." 'Thérèse the Philosopher' has a young woman playing with holy objects in a church only to be thrown into a locked room for arriving home late. Her Stations of the Cross and a few cucumbers are thrown in after her. She finds pornographic drawings in a chest and after glancing at the sexual drawings in one book, 'Thérèse the Philosopher,' uses the cucumber to pleasure herself. She escapes the room only to be set upon by a vagrant.

Paloma Picasso stars as 'Erzsébet Báthory' in the third segment. Paloma and her attendants gather young maidens from neighboring villages, bathe them and keep them in the castle. The Countess presents herself to the maidens and they fight each other to touch her and grab a piece of her clothing. One girl hides a pearl in her snatch. Her page dispenses with the women, and Paloma enjoys a bath of blood. 'Lucrezia Borgia,' the fourth segment's title character, visits her father, the pope, and her brother, the cardinal, on the day that the Dominican anti-Papist Savonarola is being burned alive at the stake. They quickly commence the seduction and debauchery of the young woman.

Borowczyk's choice of camera shots, focusing on all parts of his women from crotch to breasts to lips, is always pleasing. The 'Báthory' sequence is filled with close-ups of the doomed women as they bathe and frolic before their slaughter. Almost every female character is stripped during her appearance in the film. Although not as outlandish as some of his other works, *Immoral Tales* is most definitely the work of Borowczyk. His decision to shy away from the violence is notable as the cut in the 'Báthory' sequence from the bevy of women screaming and laughing straight to the Countess' bath is a little jarring with only our knowledge of the story to explain what is happening (I was hoping to see just how the blood was accumulated). For fans of beautiful women in various stages of undress, and historical debauchery, by both ecclesiastics and laymen.

ALL NIGHT LONG 3 The Final Chapter

(aka Ooru naito rongu 3: Saishuu-shô)
dir: Katsuya Matsumura | 1996
Tokyo Shock (DVD, 2002)

☐ Reality. Horror films often attempt to create a reality to scare you. Make you believe that what is happening is real. But so often we are treated with rubber monsters, joke-cracking horror heroes, and alternative rock scores that make us realize before anything 'horrible' ever happens to these people we can't care about anyway, because they're so unreal, the experience of being 'scared' or unsettled never has a chance to happen.

And then we have a Katsuya Matsumura film. Sure it's fake, it's a movie. But the horror presented here is all about reality. Fictional events that occur right next door to us, in our homes, on our sidewalks. Things that happen to the girl next door.

Atrocity, the third film in the series, is exactly that, though not presented with the gore-filled abandon of, say, *Dead Alive* or *Evil Dead II*. These atrocities are crimes against man himself.

Kikuo picks captured flies off sticky flypaper near some garbage to feed his insect-eating plants. He witnesses three girls teasing a fourth, until she urinates, sending a stream traveling down her leg. She sobs while performing this humiliating public act.

Kikuo's job is working security and clean-up at a sleazy hotel. He cleans up the cum rags, blood and hair left over from the casual sex encounters the hotel is used for. He joins a friend of his who teases the peeing girl and forces her to perform fellatio. After she retracts her now-bespewed face from the young man's crotch, she is mopped over and her scarred leg is stomped on.

Kikuo comes across the same girl again and imposes his own torture upon her, kicking her down and stepping on her scarred leg, leaving her whimpering on the concrete.

Two girls at the hotel rob a customer after a sexual tryst and make off but one leaves her ID. Kikuo's coworkers grab her and drag her to a garbage dump, raping her, pissing on her, and finally smashing her with a piece of porcelain. Kikuo takes advantage of the situation and brings her back to his apartment where he has been cataloguing his garbage findings and pasting up his dream girl's tossed belongings: her used feminine napkins, bits of hair, an enlarged photo he makes of her old ID card, which he has pasted over a life-sized outline of his perfect image of her.

He feeds his new toy maggots and blowdries her tired skin which he further attacks with sprays and glue. She dies and he cuts her up and drags her to the waste site.

After first torturing, then dismembering, his new toy, Kikuo has the unfortunate experience of spying on his dream girl on the closed circuit monitor at work, as she enters a hotel room with a man. At a loss to understand how something so under his control for so long could elude his direction, Kikuo destroys his totemic creations, and his final breakdown results in mayhem for all the other cast members.

Matsumura's films engage the viewer in an entirely different, more understated, over-the-top method than most Asian films. No chop socky pyrotechnics or exotic camerawork. Just bold, straight-on explorations of the human soul. Which, as we see in our daily newscasts, is always more bizarre, and frightening, then anything we might see portrayed in fiction. Though the title only mentions one night, *All Night Long 3* should reverberate even longer in the minds of its viewers.

THE RAPEMAN OF EDO

(aka Ôedo Reipuman)
dir: Naoki Uesugi | 1996
Japan Communications
(bootleg VHS)

☐ Imagine this... Japan's answer to Batman is a superhero who is admired for raping women! Dressed like the caped crusader, *The Rapeman of Edo* is a tasteless softcore fantasy that is full of flash, beautiful Asian babes, and little else.

As our story begins, Rapeman descends upon an Asian couple's home after they have made love. Rapeman breaks into the woman's home and throws whirling horseshoes at her arms which restrain any movement. Then the masked man makes his move... Cut to an all-girl spa where a group of horny Japanese men look at naked babes. Soon we are 'treated' to a large orgy. After several shots of more nudity (genitals are optically censored—standard fare in most Japanese films), a dead girl is found with a forged note from Rapeman pinned to what is left of her clothing. A man enters a ritual chamber and kneels in front of the woman at the throne. She flashes back to an encounter with another woman, revealing a large mark across her chest.

During a beauty contest, one girl completely disrobes, much to the excitement of the gathered crowd, and the derision of one of the judges. Another young woman has her robe slashed. Rapeman bursts in and has his way, forcing himself on her doggy style. He throws a robe over the woman and lays a note on her exhausted body. The masked man from the ritual chamber comes in and slashes her throat. He leaves a new note for the authorities to find.

Rapeman meets up with the ritual woman and has little problem vanquishing her. The masked man and our hero from Edo battle it out to the death... of course we all know who the winner will be. A triumphant Rapeman brings the culprits to the law and once again justice is restored.

The Rapeman of Edo is a predictably dull movie. It only succeeds as titillation for fans of naked Asian women. Granted, the softcore sex has its moments, but not enough to recommend.

LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET

dir: Roger Watkins ('Victor Janos') | 1973
Barrel Entertainment (DVD)

☐ One of the most shrouded-in-mystery films in all of cultdom becomes flesh through the incredible team at Barrel Entertainment and their compatriots. For years *Last House on Dead End Street* was just one big bundle of assumptions. There were a couple of Sun Video releases, very rare and mostly never seen in original, and numerous bootlegs, and all sorts of different myths about running time. One of the more common misnomers was that the film's creators originated the project at NYU film school. Well, after some years of hard research, we have quite a few answers to *Last House on Dead End Street*.

After noticing that bootleg copies of the film were selling on the internet for over $100, director Roger Watkins' (credited as Victor Janos) partner Suzanne put a posting up on a newsgroup asking about the film. A few fevered emails later and Mr. Watkins was in touch with film fans, and then Barrel Entertainment. Headpress publisher David Kerekes was also on the scene, meeting up with Watkins in upstate New York, and using the accumulated material for the thirty-six-page booklet that comes with Barrel Entertainment's two-disc set, and longer versions and more information compiled in *Headpress 23*.

We now know that Victor Janos is indeed Roger Watkins, and also plays the lead role of Terry Hawkins (pseudonymously played by 'Steven Morrison'). Terry Hawkins is one of the baddest ass dudes ever in film. Can you imagine this guy in *The Shining*? In the film, Terry has just been released from prison for marijuana possession. For some loose reasons, he's decided to pay back some people he worked with in the porn industry (not much of an industry in 1972) and use them in "some weird films" he's come up with. He recruits two young hippiesque chicks who "need some money," his filmmaker friend Ken, and begins his reign of terror against those who must pay.

Terry obviously has some trouble keeping friends. When he goes to visit Ken the cinematographer the door is held shut in his face. Terry wedges his way in however and soothes Ken, luring him into his latest film crew. Their 'set' is an abandoned building and they lure a blind man into a role, and kill him while wearing bizarre masks. Ken films this action and it's shown to Steve and Jim, two porn producers who have been looking for something different. So far Jim's only been able to make tepid porn-lite with his own wife merely undressing and bathing, and a little girl-on-girl touchy feely. Meanwhile, downstairs at a bizarre party, Steve's wife has covered her face with black make-up and is whipped by a hunchback, accompanied by laughter from the partygoers.

Steve and Jim make a very bad move though. As usual for independent distributors, they've stolen Terry's movie, without paying for it. And much to filmmakers delight the world over, Terry decides he's gonna make them pay for it—the hard way. Terry's gonna make a new movie this time, and Steve and Jim are going to be two of the film's stars, in addition to a 'Suzy' we've never seen before. Terry and his pals will be much more than director, cinematographer, and producers. They're also judge, jury, and most gloriously, executioners.

The 'snuff' film has caused excitement from moralists to perverts, hoping to get that one more news story, that one more reason to condemn, that one more thrill. Roger Watkins really wanted to give it to us with this film. Give it all to us. His camera never strays from the subject of Terry Hawkins' films. There's no shying away. It's all here. Right here. Screamingly, gorily presented as entertainment. There's no morality. There's just action. There are no character arcs. As soon as we meet Terry, and hear his voiceover, we've heard all we need to know about this man. His added outburst of "I'm directing this fucking moooovieeeee!" just enunciates what we already know: he's a fucking hardcore sleazebag and he'll go down in flames to make the world pay for its crimes against him.

Barrel have quickly gained a reputation as *cause célèbre* any time they pick up a new film. Their release of *Nekromantik* was chock full overflowing with goodies, and their *Last House on Dead End Street* release performs far above and beyond the call of duty. This two-disc set includes the only known existing print of the film (generously provided by Fantasia Festival's Mitch Davis), sans the ninety-one seconds discovered on the out-of-print Sun Video tape. These precious few moments have been reinserted by Barrel, and although the video artifacting is present, there are no complaints that they've chosen to weave this material into this already hard-to-find film.

HORROR STORY

(aka Kravavy román)

dir: Jaroslav Brabec | 1993

(VHS bootleg)

☐ It is 1924. Writer Josef Vachal mourns the recent loss of his wife. His mind wanders on the way back to his studio, busy at work creating the plot for a novel in progress, which consists of three mad tales mimicking late nineteenth-century Gothic horror novels.

Director Jaroslav Brabec combines wry surrealism and his cinematographic training to create a remarkable pastiche of gorgeous images replicating early cinema, most notably Méliès, Griffith and German expressionism. This cinema world is perfect for the Gothic application of Brabec's storytelling skills to Josef Vachal's self-illustrated novel *Krvavy román*, or *Bloody Novel*, a combination of the author's texts and woodcuts that had an extraordinarily small seventeen-copy print run. Brabec's screenplay is based on the Czech artist and mystic's life and work.

The three stories are filled with all manner of vile and comedic characters, expressing themselves in silent-film style. Combined in the film, they provide a swirling matrix of hacked-off fingers, necrophiliac morgue attendants, blood-hungry monks and nuns, beer-chugging cave dwellers, passionate love presented pastorally, a corrupt Jesuit, and a self-absorbed Spanish nobleman, to name just a few elements of this ever-evolving world. The different plots and characters come ever closer to life as they blend in with Vachal's own life, accelerating and coalescing until they actually can meet with their own author.

Forty-three-year-old Brabec's debut film, after serving as cinematographer for more then ten films, is a welcome admission into expressively horrific cinema. His love, admiration and skill combine to create a direct homage and continuation of the dark comedy, and attention to set construction and design that Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and Wojciech Has' *The Saragossa Manuscript* created. The further brood of Brabec's dark-cauldron mind could bear further watching with this unique ancestry and parentage.

SHE-DEVILS ON WHEELS

dir: Herschell Gordon Lewis
1968
Image Entertainment (DVD)

❑ Yee-haw! Woo-hoo! Well, there's more intense excitement in those two phrases than in Herschell Gordon Lewis' 1968 biker pic, but hey, you get to hear the bad girls whoop it up too!

Is this a feminist film? Hardly. These women are tough and ready to rumble at all times. That's pretty much all they do really. Just like real bikers! Except their ManEaters logo is like a big pink kitty. Okay...

I do have a lot of fun with this one. The 'actors' are all quite spirited, delivering the silliest of lines with as much seriousness as they can muster. When one of their members sticks with a guy, rather than just sticking him, they gotta give it to her! See, sticking with a man is against the rules. So her boyfriend gets tied to the back of a bike and he's dragged around in the parking lot.

I'd have to transcribe the whole script here to capture all the great lines. "Sex, guts, blood, and all men are mothers" is their motto. Doesn't make much sense to me to refer to the hated men as 'mothers,' but I'm not a ManEater so I may not get it...

Overall, it's just one funny movie. Action-packed if you consider staccato music playing while the women bike down the road. And bike down the road. And bike down the road. There is a bit of filler here in this Lewis pic. The main title painting of a chick on a bike is seen several times throughout the film also, usually between shots of the girls on the bikes, driving down the road.

I just like this movie. The twangy 50s/60s grind beat behind the girls' biking adventures is nice, especially for the big fight between the ManEaters and a group of male bikers they accost. One fun scene has the girls picking out their men for the night from a group of eager studs.

Lewis' commentary is truly fun and his memories of the pic are a blast. Movies like this made today just lack so much. The clothes, the music, the sense of actually wanting to make a movie. *She-Devils on Wheels* was meant to be seen, wherever it would play, not designed for a home video system, and its appeal comes through much 'broad'er due to this.

Image compiles the original theatrical trailer, a gallery of Herschell Gordon Lewis exploitation art, and a funny, hip, biker 'exposé' with tripped-out voice-over, *Biker Beach Party*, along with the film.

We're on the road!

REPO MAN

dir: Alex Cox | 1984
Anchor Bay Entertainment
(DVD, 2000)

❑ I was just learning that I could bleach my hair with hydrogen peroxide when this flick came out. Same year I saw the Ramones and Dead Kennedys and P.i.L. all in one week. And nothing has dissipated from my first experience of seeing this film. Iggy Pop's title track still just wallops me right in, and the humor works and works and works.

Alex Cox's first feature, produced by ex-Monkee Michael Nesmith, was luckily produced by Universal, and also unluckily dumped by the studio. This was a golden age when the big studios would pick up smaller films, but *Repo Man* fell through the tarmac. And luckily, it still managed to find an audience. Filled with choice lines and characters, *Repo Man* is an evergreen classic.

Young Otto (Emilio Estevez), fresh from getting fired from his grocery store stocker job, drops in on some punk buddies for a little slam dancing. He needs money and hits up his parents who lie around stoned all day watching religious television, but they've given all their money to the televangelist. Otto inadvertently gets caught up in a car repossession with Harry Dean Stanton, and after first rejecting the legal car thieves, he likes the money. Soon Otto is dressing in a suit jacket and becoming cocky about repossessing vehicles.

The repo company gets a fax about a Chevy Malibu, and then the real fun begins. Otto gets hooked up with a kooky UFO nut, and her offbeat crew are also looking for the car. In addition, a strange hard woman with a steel hand gets into the mix. Only a few people seem to know that radiation-emitting aliens are in the trunk of the vehicle.

Repo Man is filled with some of the most memorable, repeatable lines ever. The best come from the spacy Miller (Tracey Walter): "The more you drive, the less intelligent you are" is one of the more famous. And that 'plate o' shrimp.'

Anchor Bay has included a lively commentary track featuring director Alex Cox, executive producer Michael Nesmith, casting director Victoria Thomas, and stars Sy Richardson, Zander Schloss and Del Zamora. A theatrical trailer and video trailer are all included.

Keep a look out for those christmas tree air fresheners! "You'll find one in every car."

FEMALE VAMPIRE
dir: Jess Franco | 1973
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 2000)

☐ This movie has always made me laugh. The many titles of this Jess Franco classic confuse the issue of the film again and again: *Erotikill*, *The Loves of Irina*, *The Bare-Breasted Countess*, and more. *Female Vampire* is the most banal of the titles, suggesting almost a piece of direct-to-video dreck, but no, we've got a Jess Franco film here, starring the bodacious Lina Romay. Calling this film such a simple thing as *Female Vampire* is almost criminal.

Franco's film begins with fog, and into this fog walks Irina, played by Franco's longtime companion Ms. Romay. And as she gets closer, we see she's naked except for a black cape and thick leather belt. And we see her breasts. And we pan down from her breasts to her very thick black bush, and back again. And she walks on.

I find it hard to determine if this is a horror film with a lot of sexual elements, or a sex film with some horror tossed in. I think it may be the former. A favorite shot is the repetitive opening and closing close-ups of Ms. Romay's legs. The black bush sports a pink line, and back to black. Amazing! Mesmerizing. Exactly what Irina's task is, to have her victims submit to her beauty.

Irina is a lost soul, subsisting on both men and women in her desperate lonely immortality. Her ways of collecting blood are different for a vampire film. The neck is last on her list. The insides of thighs are her favorite.

The film was not only titled differently before this 'definitive' version, there were also other emphases placed in the narrative. *Erotikill*, betraying its own title, focused primarily on her blood hunger. *The Loves of Irina* offered additional hardcore shots of bloody fellatio.

There's a soft breezy poetry to the film. The sex does not seem out of place, nor do the blood-drinking scenes. And Ms. Romay is indeed as hypnotic a presence to the viewer as she is to her victims.

Image's disc includes ten minutes of alternate footage from the *Erotikill* print, the theatrical trailer, and liner notes by *Video Watchdog*'s Tim Lucas.

CANNIBAL FEROX
dir: Umberto Lenzi | 1980
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 2000)

☐ The film that took the 'banned!' label as a compliment and milked it for all it was worth has hit the DVD format, and the clarity of seeing John Morghen's penis getting chopped off by vengeful cannibals can finely be appreciated in all the artistry and finesse it was designed to be viewed with. (joke!)

Definitely in the realm of the 'how sick can you get' pics, and a real giant among cannibal films, *Cannibal Ferox* is a jewel in the crown in Lenzi's bloody career. A different sentiment than the equally famous *Cannibal Holocaust*, the film still shows that the civilized man is a much more dangerous beast than the savages out in the wild.

The film promises gore and depravity from the onset. A placard reads how horrible the film is, while a female voice bemoans the tone of the film in a voice much like an advertisement for an Oprah book-of-the-month, her speech of 'barbaric violence,' besotted with a 'look at this poor child and I care a lot' annunciation. Too classic!

Italian flick face John Morghen plays nasty cocaine-snorting Mike, in trouble with the mob back in the U.S., who harass and threaten his girlfriend. Mike travels to the Amazon with a crew doing research on cannibalism, mostly for Gloria Davis' paper debunking the myth of men eating men. After no word from the troupe, Mike's girl also travels to the Amazon, looking for the travelers.

Lenzi does everything he can to gross the viewer out. A few shots of Amazon men eating bugs get frame-filling closeups of chomping mouths. Hooks through breasts, chopped-off penises, disembowelling, the works, are all given the close-up touch. This film was made for the gorehound, and it definitely delivers.

Along with the great-sounding digital stereo 70s soundtrack embedded in the film, Image packs a few extras on this DVD, including one of the coolest menu screen selections yet produced, with machetes popping out from the side slicing John Morghen's head clean off. The commentary from Lenzi is a hoot, a bit hard to decipher with his thick accent, but the man has a very funny sense of humor. Image also includes trailers from the U.S., Germany, and Italy; a rare production still gallery with posters and publicity materials from around the world; liner notes by Bill Landis; and an on-camera interview with Umberto Lenzi.

Specifically for the true cannibal fan and gorehound, though newcomers will not walk away unscathed.

ANGUISH

dir: Bigas Luna | 1986
Anchor Bay Entertainment
(DVD, 2000)

❑ Although every other appearance of Zelda Rubinstein, the pint-sized, horrendously voiced woman from Tobe Hooper's *Poltergeist*, has me glancing through a magazine when she appears onscreen, her performance as the demented mother of Michael Lerner, urging him on to collect eyeballs, is a riveting bind that holds upon repeated viewings. But it isn't Rubinstein's performance alone, it's the movie-within-a-movie tension of the young terrified filmgoer and the whirring spinning spiral and accompanying noise that sends one into a vertiginous goose-bumped ride through this dynamically orchestrated appraisal of movie-going terror.

An accomplishment in anticipatory theater-bound horror outside the roar of Lamberto Bava's *Demons*, *Anguish* develops a full-strength tension that builds and builds until the end credits roll. I truly do not wish to 'give up' the plot, as the first realization of the film's intent can be a shock enough, though I feel safe in mentioning the pacing of each killing, movement of corpses, and the intense fear of the two girls who end up being the central characters are exquisite examples of high-tension fear.

Peppered with comic moments through dialog and acting, *Anguish* succeeds in, literally, multiple levels. Best known to American arthouse audience for his films *Jamon Jamon, Juevos de Oro, The Chambermaid on the Titanic* and his short for *Lumière and Company*, to date Luna has ignored the horror film, which we can only hope he will find the time to correct more often.

BRAWLIN' BROADS

dir: The Boone Brothers | 2000
Blackest Heart Entertainment
(VHS)

❑ Leave it to Blackest Heart to distribute the filthiest filth imaginable. This really takes the current cake in sickness.

Not a simple 'catfight' video, *Brawlin' Broads* is the real thing. WWF has nothing against these chicks! I can't even watch that costumed crap. This though, this is something else. Real women really punching and kicking the shit out of each other. Nothing faked, nothing posed. This is real.

Often in reality videos, we're really far away as viewers. We see a video-bootleg distorted view of a dead body, an accident, someone with a gun. News footage. With this production, we're right along ringside with the cameramen, and with Martin and Mitchell Boone, our hosts, we're capped up right along with them.

Measuring the talents of the fighting girls by the amount of beer bottles they rate by the brothers, these girls are further humiliated by the Boone Brothers' penned bios. None of the girls rate high in what they're thinking of their futures, as can be expected.

This is no wussy WWF bullcrap phoniness. These chicks really want to fucking hurt each other! This is not some lame-o, hair-pulling squeal-fest. These are MEAN chicks! I hadn't seen anything like this before, and yeah, I've seen Jerry Springer once or twice. The closest thing I'd seen like this was a high school hallway fight with big ol' bulldyke Jesse whomping on this Samoan chick who ripped some of her hair out and Jesse's left arm 'accidentally' landed the vice principal on his ass when he tried to break them apart. *Brawlin' Broads* is even better.

I'm not sure exactly how this stuff comes about. I've seen *Gummo* so I have some idea, but this is some seriously weird stuff. And did the Boone Brothers hook this up themselves, or just acquire the footage? Maybe they don't even know with the amount of hooch and bud they ingest.

They promise a sequel if enough copies of this sell. Are we going to see the same girls. or are we just going to read about them in serial killer statistics websites?

THE LIVING DEAD GIRL

dir: Jean Rollin | 1982
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 1999)

❑ One of Jean Rollin's more beautiful, narrative films, concerning a lost girl who has not yet realized she's dead, forever wandering amidst the living, has found a real home via Image Entertainment and their DVD release of *The Living Dead Girl.*

Marina Pierro, a veteran actress and favorite of Walerian Borowczyk (appearing in five of his films), is the lost girl's lover, guilty of not fulfilling a childhood suicide pact. Françoise Blanchard is the lost zombie (although quite easily the most beautiful zombie woman in cinema history), awakened from death by a toxic spill.

A magnificently bloody work, Rollin's lost girl wreaks butcherous havoc with delicate strokes. Whether reaching into the throat of a victim, or hovering over a nude woman's well-arranged corpse, this massively poetic film glides along wires of both soft beauty and ferocious bodily decline. A masterwork integrating the talents of all involved, including the notable score by Philippe D'Aram, accentuating Rollin's own mindset with his tuned-in orchestrations. A truly fine cinematic moment for all.

Image has gone to the careful trouble of presenting this most commercial of Rollin's films with a nice clean transfer and fine soundwork. Included are a three-and-a-half-minute trailer, a slide show of poster art and stills, and liner notes by Marc Morris.

GLEN OR GLENDA

dir: Edward D. Wood, Jr. | 1953
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 2000)

❑ This is one insane flick. Ed Wood was operating at such a different level than the rest of humanity it's astounding. His humility and self esteem were organized into other compartments than most of Earth's inhabitants. Although *Plan 9 From Outer Space* comes up most often as his crowning achievement, I'd have to select *Glen or Glenda* as the crown prize.

First off in the inability to recognize true humility, Ed Wood himself stars as the title character, although the role is credited to a 'Daniel Davis.' I almost wanted to add the descriptive term 'confused' before 'title character' but Glen is just on top of everything in this flick. Wandering around the public avenues in his pink fuzzy angora sweater top and hideous ugly make-up job with nary a care, he evinces his total apathy to any comments from passers-by. Stopping in a shop window and drooling over pretty dresses in this monstrous outfit are but one of the many tingles in this flick.

Although many sections of the film could be called highlights, Lugosi's scenes are radically insane and literal show-stoppers. How Mr. Wood pieced these random elements together to create a film is beyond fascination. Beyond surrealism. Mr. Wood's intent is so lost and muddled in his approach, it belies any current attempts at reasoning or speculation.

If anyone can help me discover the meaning of the phrase "Pull the string!" I will buy them dinner at the next Chiller show. What does this mean? What does Ed Wood want? We know he wants us to have mall-type sex-change shops, but this language, these gesticulations are so far out... Does he want more than this even?

The film really takes off when the 'mondo' section begins and we travel the world in the hopes of further enlightenment of the predicaments of those who feel they should have been born of the opposite sex. Intercut with Lugosi's antics, shots of buffalo, African skull-mask-wearing dancers, and other, to us, ephemera, Wood's plate of hyperbole is entirely too full to broadcast his point. Maybe it's reaching us in some bizarre form of subliminal entry?

All in all, I don't think I've ever seen a film that had me turning my head like Nipper the RCA dog as frequently as this. I hesitate calling *Glen or Glenda* a masterwork, and with good reason, but there's 'something' here, something undefinable, that requires a higher rating than a film of this sort would usually incur.

Image's DVD, part of the Wade Williams Collection, includes only a trailer. Sad, as I'm certain there is an entire history behind this film that would've merited at least a few pages of production or biography notes.

POSSESSION

dir: Andrzej Zulawski | 1980
Anchor Bay Entertainment
(DVD)

☐ The only film of Andrzej Zulawski that made its way to American turf, albeit cut by forty-five minutes and shorn of its original intent. Although nowhere near as intense as the hugely dysfunctional, beyond codependent relationship espoused in *Possession*, only *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* comes anywhere near the hateful intensity of two people who just cannot be rid of each other.

A pre–Satan's son Sam Neill plays Mark, beyond obsessed with his wife's infidelity (the frumpily beautiful Isabelle Adjani as Anna). So much so that he tortures himself endlessly with shaking her up and bringing her back to him. A checklist of heavy codependence runs through this relationship, and heavy love addiction in Mark's dependence and Anna's avoidance belies a truth that materializes in slow doses throughout the film, resulting in a horrific physical announcement. Her infidelity rests not just with another, but with a creature she gave birth to, first existing as a bloody lump with tentacles, metamorphosing into an alien-like pointy-headed beast, and finally emerging as...

The 'love-making' scenes are a particular delight, and the stills of those sessions have driven the hunger for fans of off-beat cinema, and they most definitely do not disappoint in their performed versions. Mark's obsessive thoughts are deliriously realized by Bruno Nuytten's camera movements. Incessantly rocking back and forth in a chair, his mind seething with thoughts of rescuing and getting Anna back, the camera swoops in and back, narrowly missing his head on the return.

Although always marketed as a 'horror film,' and it is a horror film, those looking for a sex-filled mushy gushy lovegore fest may or may not find what they're looking for. The focus of the film is the horror that this couple has created with their intensity for chaos, which in actuality is the metaphor created by the embryonic child-thing that Adjani has smitten herself with. Fans of Roman Polanski's *The Tenant* will understand the horror presented here.

If this is but a mere taste of Zulawski's power as a filmmaker, my DVD player is ready to rumble with more of the emotion-shattering work of this highly-gifted Polish filmmaker. Really, an astounding work, and thanks to Daniel Bird who had established a relationship with the director for a book study, this film is now available for our consumption.

Mr. Bird accompanies Mr. Zulawski on a dynamic and intelligent commentary track, highlighting further revelations on Zulawski's particular obsessions at work. Anchor Bay's DVD also includes the international trailer and U.S. theatrical trailer.

Marvelously presented in its full 1:66 ratio, and sharp and clear and colorful, Anchor Bay has done a very fine job of transporting this film from European obscurity to American establishment. We can only hope that other film companies find more of Zulawski's work to transfer.

MS. 45

dir: Abel Ferrara | 1981
Image Entertainment (DVD)

☐ The jump in aesthetic quality from Ferrara's first horror feature (*Driller Killer*) to the beauty, grace and finesse of *Ms. 45* is astounding. From the cinematography to Ms. Tamerlis' mute performance as the title character to the biting soundtrack, *Ms. 45* is an indelible classic.

The late Ms. Tamerlis (who was Harvey Keitel's compatriot in drug addiction in Ferrara's *Bad Lieutenant*, credited as Zoë Lund) breathes silent fire into the tragedy of poor Anna, first humiliated by an alleyway rape (performed with fine cruelty by Mr. Ferrara himself as 'Jimmy Laine') then by an attempted rape by an intruder in her home. Smashing the perpetrator's finality of attack with an iron, Anna then has to dispose of the body—piece by piece. Beyond silent about her problems, due both to her inability to speak and her own trauma, Anna slowly succumbs to the weight of these attacks, becoming an avenger against all perpetrators of harm. The only problem is she doesn't know when to stop.

A few beautiful and memorable set pieces complement the film, especially the multiple gang-member killing in Central Park. Precisely choreographed, these moments are a ballet of feminine violence. The film though never takes a feminist stance. If anything she is equally condemned for her own 'god-playing' crimes. The final slow-motion *Carrie*-like dance of death exposes this vigilante as an out-of-control killer, not only debilitated by her muteness, but by her blindness to who the 'real' perpetrators are.

Image's widescreen DVD is, of course, a noticeable improvement over previous releases, though this reviewer is sad to report that there are three noticeable clips in the film. During the first rape we cut to the interior of Anna's apartment being ransacked, the second rape is shortened, and one character's shooting death at the end is clipped

Equally sad is the lack of extras. Image's previous laserdisc release at least included a trailer. Ferrara has performed commentaries on a couple of his film releases on DVD now, and this film demands the same sort of attention. Maybe we'll be lucky enough to see a re-release with the cuts replaced and Ferrara's words on his film. Until then, we've got a nice bright copy of a classic vengeance film to watch, still frame, and savor.

BLOOD FEAST

dir: Herschell Gordon Lewis
1963
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 2000)

❑ The film that started it all! The granddaddy of gore films is now available on DVD in a stunning new transfer where the reds are as red as red can be!

Opening with the absolutely classic scenario of a young woman getting in the tub while the radio blares a news break that a killer is on the loose, *Blood Feast* never lets up on its hilariousness or gore.

Mrs. Fremont is looking for something 'special' for a party for her daughter. She finds the shop of Fuad Ramses and the man promises her that the feast he prepares will be like no other she's ever had. While Mrs. Fremont prepares for her big party, Mr. Ramses is busy chopping up various townspeople as offerings to his Egyptian god.

Connie Mason, Playboy bunny, is extraordinary as Ms. Fremont's daughter. She has absolutely no acting talent whatsoever. Or memory. In a remarkably fantastic scene, Mrs. Fremont reads from a script in full view of the camera, while Ms. Mason reads right off cue cards, her head zipping back and forth while she talks. Astounding! Scott Hall is equally inept at learning his lines, and resorts to reading them off the palm of his hand!

The delirious score is created by Mr. Lewis himself. Its slow drum beats and soft violins play a nice daunting backdrop for Ramses' deeds. One of the more memorable killings involves the extraction of a young woman's tongue. A fine amount of bloody red escapes the poor actress' mouth as Ramses removes the sheep's tongue from her mouth. There are also lingering pans across another victim's body, testament to the intention of the filmmakers: to give you as much bang for your buck as the buckets of red would allow.

Highly overacted, poorly underacted, colorful and fun, *Blood Feast* is a necessary favorite for fans of the gore film.

Image's transfer is excellent, and includes illuminating commentary from Herschell Gordon Lewis and producer David F. Friedman, original theatrical trailer, rare outtakes, an educational short subject *Carving Meat* with William Kerwin and Harvey Korman, and a gallery of exploitation art. An amazing package!

TWO THOUSAND MANIACS!

dir: Herschell Gordon Lewis
1964
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 2000)

❑ What a follow-up! An absolute classic pic, introducing a new element into the gore film: not just exploitation of death and dismemberment, *Two Thousand Maniacs!* makes the relationship of the viewer more than one of voyeurism. Here, extreme unmitigated sadism works its way in, and takes strong hold. In *Blood Feast*, Fuad murdered his victims for his god. In *Two Thousand Maniacs!* the victims are tortured and killed, for the sole purpose of torturing and killing them. A particular frisson is developed, a rather tasty one at that, making this film a stand-out amidst gore films.

Two groups of travelers are diverted by false detour signs to the town of Pleasant Valley. As they drive into the strange town, with banners and banjo players galore, they're dragged right out of their cars for some 'fun' in this simple town.

Thomas Wood and Connie Mason join in on the fun, fresh from *Blood Feast*. Connie still needs to read her lines off cue cards, but she seems a little more comfortable this time around.

The real stars of this bit of sadistic cinema are the townspeople themselves. Little Billy makes you want to take off your belt and put it to good use. Slim Pickens doesn't hold a candle to the demented sheriff, and the rest of the revelers are as perfect as can be.

One bit of strangeness involves Mr. Vraney's note on the commentary that the villagers look like they're having a moment of reflection at their crime of dropping a large boulder on one of the hapless travelers. To me it looks like they're nodding appreciation at their cruelty, but maybe that's looking through my eyes...

Really and truly another grand classic in post-Guignol film entertainment, Image's DVD release of *Two Thousand Maniacs!* is yet another reason to cheer.

Image's transfer is excellent, and includes illuminating commentary from Herschell Gordon Lewis and producer David F. Friedman, original theatrical trailer, rare outtakes, and a gallery of exploitation art. A bloody incredible package!

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE

dir: Edward D Wood Jr. | 1959
Image Entertainment (DVD)

❑ *Plan 9 from Outer Space* really is a bad movie. It's just plain bad. Cheap. Nonsensical. A farce. But within its awfulness are some mighty memorable sequences that have given it what it needs to be remembered.

Ed Wood's most famous film, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* also featured the 'talents' of a good many citizens who continue to live off the film's notoriety. Vampira openly acknowledged her own weaknesses.

Thoughtless, selfish aliens want to take over Earth. They have decided to use Plan 9, the reanimation of the dead. Safely hidden in their spaceship with only curtains for walls, the very Earth-like aliens calmly discuss their terrible deeds. The U.S. government personnel could not invoke less emotion in their findings that Earth is in trouble. Most of the actors do go over the top enough with the atrocious dialog to give their lines that extra oomph, but often the lines are just read stiltingly.

Bela Lugosi's few minutes of saved film (he died shortly after production began) are blended into the other footage in very bizarre ways. The last shots ever of Lugosi show him stepping outside a house and looking at a flower. Somehow Mr. Wood figured this would be a nice scene, showing the poor old man's heart broken. Later, of course, he's his fearsome, cloaked self, quite reminiscent of his role in *Dracula*. These poor bits do not make up enough screen time so another actor did a poor imitation of Bela, with his cape pulled up to his eyes, and is done away with in typical Woodian spendthriftness, in both relation to effects and story.

The amazingly inept film is accompanied by a compendium of interview bits and other takes in *Flying Saucers Over Hollywood: The Plan 9 Companion*. Gregory Walcott, Carl Anthony, Paul Marco, Vampira, Conrad Brooks, Forrest J Ackerman, Sam Raimi, and Joe Dante all offer comments on the film's importance in their lives, and insights into Ed Wood's personal character.

It really is amazing to have *Plan 9 from Outer Space* on DVD, along with the documentary, and it looks fantastic for what it is. I've given the film a sliding scale grade, somewhere between four and eight. Four for the slower, though funny, occasional dialogs, and for the images of Vampira approaching with taloned arms extended, or Tor Johnson's magnificent rise from the dead, my head comes right around to the eight.

Part of the Wade Williams Collection, Image Entertainment's *Plan 9* is joined by a few other Ed Wood titles including his other equally infamous non-hit, *Glen or Glenda*.

FAUST

dir: Jan Švankmajer | 1995
Kino Video (DVD, 2003)

❑ Jan Švankmajer's presence in current popular culture can be felt in many places, including videos by Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson and the opening credits for the remake of *The Haunting of Hill House*.

Mastering several short subjects, Švankmajer has also produced a couple of delightful feature films, including his telling of Lewis Carroll's tale, *Alice*.

In *Faust*, his wild and imaginative, dark and surreal combinations of puppets, claymation and people, bear his trademark, complete with antique marionettes, bizarre configurations of living clay creatures, and his penchant for putting humans in situations they are not familiar with, and do not know how to handle. It can be rough when a few lumps of clay sprout eyes and make their way across the floor to plop away outside the window.

Faust (played by famed Czech Petr Cepek) begins as an everyday fellow who leaves his usual subway station to be handed a map that directs his future. He crumples it up and tosses it away, only to find the exact textless map in his mail. Following signs he finds a decrepit theater, and a copy of Goethe's *Faust*. As he reads, he invokes a command to raise a fierce demon, who, following the classic tale, offers him immense earthbound happiness in exchange for his immortal soul.

The film then takes amazing turns as Faust is shown possible realities for his wishes. An amazing sequence shows Faust's temptation by many summoned demon marionettes, and his own guardian angel marionettes fight a losing battle with them, ending up raped and bloodied by the dark wooden creatures.

Mesmerizing and fascinating, Švankmajer succeeds yet again in creating a phenomenal world of impossible happenings, made flesh by animating simple objects, and using wooden armaments to create a more frightening reality for our hapless hero.

DEADBEAT AT DAWN

dir: Jim VanBebber | 1988
Synapse Films (DVD)

☐ Jim VanBebber is one of the most talked about of modern independent directors. And by independent we're not talking boring twenty-somethings-in-New-York crap, we're talking someone who's making movies by the skin of his teeth, or more apt, the flesh off his bones.

After making numerous 8mm short films, Jim embarked on a feature film in the late 80s that would resonate for years in cult collectordom. Receiving a limited, and barely paid, release on Ketchum Video, *Deadbeat at Dawn* has been discussed, hunted for, and praised for years.

Thankfully Synapse Films has corrected the film's 'lost' aspects and created this release, complete with commentary from VanBebber, Mike King, actor Marc Pittman, and a British cineaste (whose comments are so short and clipped, they're really not worthwhile; sorry old chap!). Having had the film on two different self-produced releases from VanBebber himself, I've always loved the film, and after a few years of leaving the old crappy VHS on the shelf, I ate this flick up with three repeat viewings, the second to listen to the insightful audio commentary from the ever-drawling VanBebber and guests.

Many independent filmmakers make attempts to duplicate a style of film they have long been fans of. VanBebber is one of the few to get it right. An astounding display of street martial arts, blood-drenched violence, gang warfare, hardcore drug use, editing, and an engrossing score create a classic of street cinema.

VanBebber himself plays Goose, the gang leader often at odds with rivals. After a knife battle in the local cemetery, Goose tells his girl that he's leaving the gangs and he will only be for her. His nemesis decides this is not the correct path for Goose and sets up a plan for revenge that leaves Goose alive and his girl dead. Burning with angst and loss, Goose first descends into a nightmare of drug use, suicidal thoughts, and bloody apparitions of his lost love.

Thwarting a heist, Goose makes off with the cash and the film moves toward one of the most amazing climaxes in late-twentieth-century cinema. Violent, fast-paced and wild, the last ten minutes of *Deadbeat at Dawn* deserve serious study for any action-film aficionado.

This is the best the film has ever looked to me (I also caught it during the film's New York premiere in 1995 and this still looks better). *My Sweet Satan*, Jim's notorious short film telling of the Ricky Casso killing, does not fare so well. Intensely artifact-ridden, this portion of the DVD I could easily see being redone. The DVD also includes the trailer for *Chunk Blower*, a short-lived project that only made it to the trailer stage and includes the late Dwayne Goettel of Skinny Puppy and Bill Leeb from Frontline Assembly. And yes, the flames really did go over their heads, if you look at the shot of the Polaroids, you'll see yours truly in the pic all the way to the left. And there's a bonus 'Easter Egg' video for the Skinny Puppy track Spasmolytic that you can access through the main menu. Also included are some outtakes from *Deadbeat*. The only thing missing on this DVD would be another short, *The Last Days of John Martin*, currently only available on a *Film Threat* videotape that also includes Mike King's *Doper* pot documentary.

We can only hope that someone fathers Mr. VanBebber through another full-length feature film, with an upfront budget, and allows room for plenty of his trademark blood and gore.

BLACK SUNDAY

(aka The Mask of Satan)
dir: Mario Bava | 1960
Image Entertainment (DVD)

☐ Ah, yes! For an archetypal classic horror film—definitely in the same lineage as the Universal pictures—to have been denied a legitimate release for so many years is a criminal act. Forever quoted by film fans, and filmmakers in their own works, *Black Sunday* presents itself as the timeless chunk of cinematic history as director Mario Bava created it to be.

Princess Asa (Barbara Steele, or 'Steel' as presented in the film's opening credits) is condemned to death for witchcraft, along with her brother Prince Igor Javutich. In one of the first episodes of gore in cinema, a strong metal mask with sharp spikes is held over her face, and slammed on with a huge wooden hammer. Her screams are accompanied by gushes of blood from the mask, and we fade to the future.

Two hundred years later, the crypt where the evil witch's corpse is kept is found by two traveling doctors. After peeking into the stone coffin, one pricks his finger and the drop of blood from the accident begins a process of reanimating. From her own grave, lying still, waiting for her new life, Asa summons her brother to rise from the grave. Plans for a new reign for her and her brother begin to take fuller shape when she lures a young man to her coffinside, him planting a kiss on the still-not-alive-again Asa's beautiful, yet horrible, face, disfigured from the spiked mask pounding from two centuries before.

And it is this face that has made Barbara Steele one of the favorite icons of evil in horror cinema. Although only making this one film with Mario Bava, her high cheekbones and portrayal of both Princess Asa and her descendant Princess Katia, a more beautiful version, has sustained her title of the 'Queen of Horror,' and her archetypal embodiment of strong beauty and disfigured evil has reigned supreme over all other contenders for over forty years.

Mr. Lucas' commentary is technical, intensively researched, and also filled with valuable trivia. Noting the differences between the AIP version, and offering full biographies on each actor, this commentary is a catalog of anything that could ever be known about this film. This, of course, means that it can be enjoyed more than once for almost every doorknob, dress button, or pointed lamp becomes a piece of iconographic cinema history. Lord knows how many times Mr. Lucas has viewed this film, and we're planning on seeing it at least one per cent as many times as he has. Which means we'll probably be wearing out our DVD's grooves within six months.

Image's excellent packaging of this title includes info-packed liner notes by Tim Lucas, a theatrical trailer, photo and poster gallery and a nice menu screen collage with various *Black Sunday* imagery and music. With Image Entertainment's dedication to producing the finest quality entertainment they can, we can only hold baited breath for the vast catalogue of upcoming titles they will be putting so much hard work into. And with the ever-vigilant eye of the Video Watchdog at the helm of the Mario Bava Collection, it's fair to say it can only get better.

VAMPYROS LESBOS

dir: Jess Franco | 1971
Synapse Films (DVD, 2000)

☐ You've heard the soundtrack. You've seen the numerous stills of the late and lovely Soledad Miranda, but how many people have actually seen the film? Thanks to this two-years-in-the-making release from Synapse Films, that number shall grow.

The cult of Soledad Miranda, created by Peter Blumenstock and Tim Lucas, and unknowingly begun by Spanish director Jess Franco, should continue to grow after more copies of *Vampyros Lesbos* get out. Filled with all the images that Franco fans have come to expect from this late-60s period of his filmmaking, *Vampyros Lesbos* succeeds as another high-fetish, sleazy psychedelic groovefest.

Franco's film rewrites Stoker's story as a female-enriched nightmare sexual pop art odyssey, complete with that swingin' psychedelic dance score so popular with underground hipsters of today, even finding commercial placement on the soundtrack for the film *Jackie Brown*. And with the fantastic gyrations of the ghostly Soledad Miranda, viewers will be treated to enough eye candy to overlook what little story is presented.

Ms. Miranda plays the Countess Nadina, a vampiress who lures visitors to her island resort by stripping nightly in a club in Istanbul. The film begins with that sitar/electronic soundtrack blaring while Soledad rolls across a stage with only a mirror, candelabra, and stoic nude blonde accomplice as set dressing. Ewa Strömberg is Linda Westinghouse, one such victim; having dreamed of Nadina before seeing her onstage, Linda is sent to the Countess' compound to investigate the will of Count Dracula, leaving everything to the Countess. Linda becomes enraptured by the Countess, recognizing her as the same woman from the club and her dreams, and quickly falls prey to her. When Ewa awakens, she find Nadina lying face up in her swimming pool, blood dripping from the sides of her mouth, and faints from consciousness. She awakens in Dr. Seward's asylum, having forgotten all that has transpired, even forgetting her name.

Complete with mad doctors, nighttime nightmare visits, screaming blondes and bloody faces, Franco's twist on the vampire tale, made with low-budget pop art aplomb, would work equally well as background video wallpaper for your own gothic groove parties. Manfred Hübler's music is omnipresent in the film, making even random shots of water, scorpions, and scarves exciting. The film is actually fairly linear with its simple storyline, peppered with sex-o-delic shots of Soledad in various states of repose.

Synapse presents the original German uncut version of the film at its 1:66 ratio. They've also included removable English subtitles, so as not to obscure various anatomies of the blood-seeking women in the film. A theatrical trailer is included, and a fold-out liner-notes sleeve with words from *Video Watchdog*'s Tim Lucas.

Somewhere on an island far away, Soledad Miranda lives on. Her arms, and legs, are open and she's ready to receive new members to her cult. Just break out the bloody marys and you're set for a wild night.

SHIVER OF THE VAMPIRES

(aka Les Frissons des Vampires, Sex and the Vampire, Vampire Thrills)
dir: Jean Rollin | 1971
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 1996)

☐ One of director Jean Rollin's most deliriously dense and full films, *Shiver of the Vampires* is, in itself, a compendium of exciting EuroHorror energy and images.

Opening with a strange burial ceremony rendered in black and white, the film then moves into lurid, bright color. In his closest moment to Welles, Rollin's camera moves through an open castle doorway to show the vampire's two assistants ready for their master. Encountering him in deathly repose at the top of a staircase, he admits that his race must be destroyed, and only the two girls can save him from the menace of his disease.

If I get this descriptive of each passage of this monumental film, I'd be taking up too much space. I must move through the highlights which include the haunting Dominique as an ultra-creepy and sexy vampiress, appearing from within a midnight-striking grandfather clock's bowels, losing herself in the castle via levitation down the chimney, and magically appearing behind bedroom curtains, brazing them open as if on a Broadway stage. And she's nude. A lot.

A newlywed couple and a pair of vampire hunters find themselves victims to the madwoman's deathly rampage against mankind. The philosophizing vampires, dreading their condition, find well-trained lights—and costume design—of all colors and textures wrapping them in various cinematic garments. A thick script for Rollin, rife with notations on the vampire's lifestyle of the dead, is churned into a chunky brew with the visuals, and tweaked-out groovy psychedelic rock score provided by Acanthus.

Image's fine letterboxed presentation includes the original theatrical trailer in both French and English, and three still galleries totalling forty-three images.

DANCE WITH THE DEVIL

(aka Perdita Durango)
dir: Alex de la Iglesia | 1997
A-Pix Entertainment
(DVD, 1999)

☐ Damn! Woo-hoo! This flick is exactly the kick-in-the-pants that road movies need! Yeah, yeah, yeah, you're already a David Lynch fan and his filmic recreation of Barry Gifford's text for *Wild at Heart* has already grabbed you with its mild insanity, but Alex de la Iglesia pumps the testosterone, and estrogen, into the gelatin layer of the celluloid for this non-stop, violence-and-sex-filled romp through American soil.

Well-known to Spanish audiences is Javier Bardem, looking like someone 'out of a bad Black Sabbath video' with his bang-cut black hair and snake-skin boots, with the snake heads still attached. Spotting Perdita Durango (Rosie Perez) at the Mexico-U.S. border, the volatile pair become quickly attached, and sexually entangled in a butt-baring, bed-shaking, sweaty scene where the two pound each other almost senseless with their fiery lust.

Put in touch with an overlord criminal (Don Stroud) by his cousin, Romeo enlists Perdita's help in transporting a truckload of human foetuses for use in making women's cosmetics. Hot on their trail is James Gandolfini (a few years before making his landmark role as Tony Soprano on HBO's *The Sopranos*), as a federal agent who faces obstacles at every turn with the bumbling police force at his aid (when introduced, the chief is receiving a blowjob from a flabby Mexican woman while staring at a photo of Ava Gardner).

The bit of adventure in grabbing the foetus truck is not enough for our heroes so they kidnap a young WASP couple (Aimee Graham, Heather's sister; and Harley Cross) at gunpoint and put them through every living hell imaginable on the way. First grabbing them by the hair with guns in their faces right off the street, the kids are subjected to the casual depravity that Romeo and Perdita espouse as their way of life. Blandly discussing murder, ritual sacrifice, sexual debasement and the like, the kids are constantly wide-eyed and terrified at their predicament. Quickly, through the forced maneuvering of their captors, they begin to enjoy their drastically realized new life, with young Aimee (wearing a Nirvana 'rape me' shirt no less) "moving her ass" in time with Romeo's violent thrusts.

No expense is spared in sharing everything that the kids and criminal couple experience. Every millimeter of Ms. Graham, Javier Bardem and Rosie Perez is on full display. Well, they still leave out the penises, but close enough. The bottle-in-face scene is as bloody as you could hope for, with the victim's mangled face squirming beneath the slamming broken bottle.

Alas, and with much regret, I must complain that this A-Pix version of *Perdita Durango*, the film's original title, is the shortest version available. I had already watched a Spanish version that included a few seconds of implied oral sex between crime patriarch Don Stroud and a very young girl in party attire, before he slaps her away for not performing to his satisfaction. In A-Pix's criminally titled 'Director's Cut,' the scene opens with the girl crying on the couch, and we have no reason why.

In one of the most confusing cuts, two scenes are trimmed slightly, and I have yet to hear why. In a scene that is really quite poignant, and actually tosses a small dash of compassion into the character of Romeo, he reminisces on a film screening of *Vera Cruz* he had seen as a child. At the end of the film, the hero is gunned down and lays there as his slayer approaches. In a fantastic bit of cinema melding, at the end of the Spanish version I had seen, this moment is relived by melding old footage with new. For reasons that to this reviewer are inexplicable, both the early reference is trimmed, and the matching final clip is trimmed entirely.

On the plus side the film looks fantastic and the sound mix is loud and rumbly, greatly enhancing the sense of unease the film projects with its characters' blasé attitude towards the horrifying violence they commit.

I give the film a 'ten.' A-Pix's cut release should only merit a 'one' due to my own feelings on trimming and censorship, but the work that they put into transferring the film, authoring the sound mix, and even releasing this film at all in America bumps that low number up considerably. Here's hoping that one day we will see a true 'Director's Cut' of this amazing example of Spanish-American cinema.

THE DEMONIACS

(aka Les Demoniaques, Les Diablesses, Curse of the Living Dead)
dir: Jean Rollin | 1974
Image Entertainment (DVD)

☐ The 'wreckers' are a band of motley modern-day pirates who use the beam from a lighthouse to guide passing ships into the rocks, then jump on ship, rape the women and kill everyone on board. One dark night (though brightly lit by movie lamps!) the Captain's horrid henchmen rape two young women in white, survivors of a wreck, and smash their skulls, ending their young lives. Kinda.

The girls come back to haunt the Captain and his mates. Joelle Coeur is mainly unworried, preferring to dance naked and turn on the men around her. Only the captain has fear of these apparitions, but a barroom psychic's abilities convince the Captain the girls must be about, and are his doom.

Following his themes of paired women (here the girls are so close they are almost Siamese twins, their blonde hair and white nightdresses blending together into almost one beast), and even a clown (a descendent of one of the clowns from *Requiem for a Vampire*, even played by the same actress, Mirielle Dargent), who leads the frail ghosts to a man of professed magic. The pirates attempt further kills on these ghosts, but they cannot be done away with so easily. It takes more than ambushes to rid them of these dogged beasts.

Plentiful in its female breasts, generous in its bloodletting, fantastic in its story and filmmaking style, *The Demoniacs* is yet another notch in the Rollinian oeuvre, one that adds subtle touches and brushstrokes across the erotic horror master's already brilliant canvas.

Image's fine transfer is a letterboxed presentation and includes the original French theatrical trailer, and three still galleries totalling twenty-nine images.

TOWER OF EVIL

dir: Jim O'Connolly | 1972
Elite Entertainment (DVD, 1999)

❑ A simple night of sex and frolic becomes entrenched in death and gory violence in this slice-of-the-70s British terror film. Two fisherman find a man's body face down in blood. They climb the lighthouse stairs, finding another body. As they adjust the corpse, the head rolls away. A third body (Robin Askwith, who would later star in *Horror Hospital*) is found with a spear, right through the peaceful butterfly applique on his t-shirt.

When they open a wooden door a crazed nude woman rushes out and stabs one of the fishermen (George Coulouris, of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* fame). Subduing her, she is then placed under a hypnotizing machine of many colored lights, recanting partial details of her horrors on Snape Island, with flashes of nude lovemaking and horrific violent events.

The researchers make off for Snape Island, dressed to the nines in 70s London fashion, bickering amongst themselves while unlocking the secret of Snape Island, the young girl's fragmented memories, and the mystery of just who, or what, killed the young islandgoers.

Tower of Evil is a fun trip back to a long-gone time of groovy British cinema. Sex and violence are the order of the day, and gruesome monstrous terror furthers the grimy demise of the teens. Scary isn't the word here. Turned-on terror would be a better description of *Tower of Evil*'s gifts for the adventurous film-renter.

Elite's presentation at 1:85 is clean and crisp and offers a theatrical trailer. With Robin Askwith's presence, appearing just one year before the making of Elite's release of *Horror Hospital*, a fun double feature of sex and gore are just two discs away.

HORROR HOSPITAL

dir: Anthony Balch | 1973
Elite Entertainment (DVD, 1999)

❑ Anthony Balch's *Horror Hospital* is a far cry from the experimental work he conducted with William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, but shows a wild sense of humor that quite possibly was influenced by the famous literary cut-up artists. And that term 'cut-up' definitely refers to the zany antics of Michael Gough and friends as they enact their plan to 'cure' the young people of early 70s England of their hang-ups, by frying their brains and turning them into gape-mouthed zombified guinea pigs.

Michael Gough's role as Dr. Storm is especially fun, considering his part in Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow*. Along with his half-sized henchman, Gough's buggy is equipped with a long blade and basket on the side to behead any escapees from his hospital of horror. These are the ghastliest moments in the film. Most of *Horror Hospital* concerns young Jason (Robin Askwith) and his new friend Judy wanting a vacation, but finding themselves with much harder work than expected, especially after Jason had left due to pressures from a diabolical rock band taking over his stage, including one Simon Lust in the Mystic Rock Band, as it's listed in the end credits.

Judy's Aunt Harris is married to Dr. Storm and although she had not replied to Judy's letters, hoping the girl would not come, she now finds herself lording over her niece's actions, preparing the same fate as the other groovy kids populating the creepy mansion.

For some reason, all the zombified folk at the castle don't faze the young couple and they spend a fair amount of time in physical embrace. Other guests do sense trouble and are quickly dispensed with either by Dr. Storm's killer buggy or by the Biker Boys, cop-looking brutes who bludgeon the guests bloody.

Horror Hospital captures a period of British horror we may not see again for some time. The early 70s films were offering gore for filmgoers of the time, and *Horror Hospital* tosses in a few decapitated heads and bandaged mind-controlled youngsters for good measure. Not a great film by any means, but filled with tons of fun, bits of gore, and teenage vagabonds.

The DVD offers the widescreen version of the film, and is quite obviously missing its original credits. For some reason a 'trailer' of sorts has been cobbled together from video-generated titles and one quick shot of a skinned man grabbing a cane to beat a victim, but it really isn't even worth clicking into. Looking at the great lurid DVD box is more worthwhile for the anticipation of fun 70s British horror just an open/close DVD-player door click away.

FASCINATION

dir: Jean Rollin | 1979
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 1999)

❑ 'Beauty' is the DVD for Jean Rollin's masterwork *Fascination*. Never has this film appeared so crisp, so colorful, so clear. And what better way to present a beautiful film filled with beautiful people and beautiful images. There are many frameable tableaux transferred to this disc, as is quite evidenced in the first few minutes at the abattoir where all classes of people are consuming cow blood to stave off anemia. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.

A bandit makes off with the shared booty and holes up in a castle with two particularly strange young women, one the beautiful sex kitten Brigitte Lahaie. After much teasing and game-playing, and a few attempts on him from his former cohorts in crime, the robber must succumb to the mad desires of the women in the castle, culminating in a lesbian orgy of diaphanous nightie-wearing vampires, crawling over each other for a taste of blood.

Magnificent images abound in this Rollin masterpiece, including the deservedly famous shot of Lahaie wielding a large scythe, slashing her way towards the castle. The doomed romanticism of Rollin's very French filmmaking is heightened by the film's low budget, relying on the strong imagery of near-naked bloodthirsty young women against the solemn locale of the castle. Exotic and captivating, *Fascination* clearly earns its title.

Philippe D'Aram's amazing score, righteously classic in its force and power, opens the film, and quickly sets the tone for this lovefeast of horror cinema. Digitally cleaned and properly formatted (although missing its end credits and ending abruptly with a still frame), Jean Rollin's *Fascination* is ready to be enjoyed again and again, if not for repeated viewing, then as gorgeous wallpaper for dressing the home.

THE DIRTY GIRLS

dir: Radley Metzger | 1964
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 1999)

❑ A man and woman's light laughter as the woman's hand removes the phone from its cradle clues us in to the purpose of this early Radley Metzger film: simple debaucheries will occur, and we're not going to go too far, but just far enough. The soothing huskiness of the narrator's voice prepares us:

"This is the story of three girls. Some live by the telephone, and some live on the street. Yvonne of the throaty laugh. Jenine, strong-shouldered and passionate. Clio, petite, trusting, and with a titillating shyness. Tonight it will be with Garance. A hundred women in one. Who loves tonight to live tomorrow, and who lives tonight to love tomorrow."

A mid-thirties virgin finds himself a willing teacher of the sensual arts in Garance, a beautiful young European woman. She tells him she never turns men, or boys, away. He drinks a bit and they head to the mating pad. He's a quick learner! Later in the evening she meets a man who's not so nice, and wishes to beat her with a belt for twice the regular price of an evening of love.

The women in question actually are much cleaner than the title would suggest. *The Dirty Girls* is exactly the 'arty French film' that Sharon Tate chose for her career in *Valley of the Dolls*. A film of soft, sensuous, and also silly tales of modern European sex of the early 60s. The film presents a few bared breasts, some lingerie, a whip or two, but overall, with the entrancing voice of the narrator describing the girls' lives, *The Dirty Girls* comes off as more of a late-night early-80s Cinemax treat that you watched while your parents were asleep.

Technically, *The Dirty Girls* is quite beautiful. The lighting, black and white widescreen cinematography and lilting sultry jazz score are all handled with the precision of a softcore porn master. *The Dirty Girls*, though, does not offer pornography at all, but the chance to spend an evening with three gorgeous European women. Radley Metzger may not have yet spread his wings with this early film, but the budding of his future works begins here, and would eventually grow to the thorny rose that produced the classic *Score*.

Image presents the film with the original theatrical trailer and some interesting scenes that were trimmed before the film's release, including a curious episode with a nun's costume. A few blips and fidgets in the transferred film, but never before have these women been so lovingly caressed by the undulating frames of the video screen.

THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTED

(aka La Nuit du Traquées)
dir: Jean Rollin | 1980
Image Entertainment (DVD)

☐ A departure from Rollin's more notorious sexy vampire films, *The Night of the Hunted* plays more like a Cronenberg film at the time of *Rabid* or *They Came from Within*, with its 'medical center' being the central locale.

A concerned Robert (Vincent Gardnere) finds a road-walking Elisabeth (Brigitte Lahaie) looking rather lost and picks her up. Neither of them notices a nude redhead, Veronique (Dominique Journet), loping along behind them, crying for Elisabeth. Robert soon discovers that Elisabeth has a strange form of amnesia, where she forgets things as soon as they happen. His caring for her turns into a sexual encounter. Once he is out of his home, Dr. Francis and his female assistant kidnap her and bring her back to their sanitarium, a high-rise populated by lonely souls who have forgotten who they are.

She is reintroduced to Veronique, who she barely remembers, and Catherine, whom she shares a mutual unknowingness with. These scenes of women who have not only forgotten themselves but each other are handled as a soft poetry, played with a light touch of the somnambulism the 'patients' exhibit themselves.

Although Image's box art plays up a shot of a dead woman with a pair of opened scissors jabbed right through her eyes, this is the goriest moment of the film. Rollin concentrates here more on the lost qualities of the women's lives, than on their dismemberment, although there is a one particular rape/murder where the red flows.

The film looks great, yet another fantastic improvement over all those previous fourth-generation bootlegs, and is letterboxed at 1:66. There are a couple of spots of print damage, but these moments are barely distracting. Though the film does end abruptly, with a still framing of the last shot and no final credits, leaving this reviewer wondering if there may have been just a little bit more footage that needed to be retrieved.

The disc includes a sixteen-still photo gallery and two advertising posters. While not exemplary of what Mr. Rollin is more notorious for, *The Night of the Hunted* is a fine addition to the collector of European erotic horror. For an additional cheap thrill, watch the special effects man actually cut the string on the gunman at 87m 15s. Sure couldn't see that in those fuzzy bootlegs!

STRANGLER OF THE SWAMP

dir: Frank Wisbar | 1946
Image Entertainment (DVD)

☐ A favorite of film historian William K. Everson, *Strangler of the Swamp* is a classic horror film exhibiting the noir style of the Val Lewton films, using its darkened backdrops as a vehicle for the storytelling.

Three women take the barge across the lake, expressing their idea that ferryman Douglas may have not been guilty of the murder he was accused of years ago, and that his incrimination of murder may be a wrongdoing. They are also very afraid of ferryman Douglas' spirit, the swamp strangler, but the townsmen tell them that there is no such ghost. A noose hangs overhead as the three, delivering their lines as if they were the Three Sisters from *Macbeth*, mention that a village man was found with a noose around his neck. The women beleaguer ferryman Joseph with their fears and admonish him for leaving up an old noose at the other end of the barge trip.

Ferryman Douglas appears out of the misty swamp for Joseph, and the long-tied noose appears. Joseph throws the deadly rope in the air only to have it land right around his neck, tying itself off in the process. The ghost pulls himself back across the lake, remembering his previous occupation. Young, sweet Maria comes back to town to see her grandfather and takes over his job of ferryman, and she proves to have even more skills than tugging a barge across a swamp.

The shadowed, dark backgrounds of the film may first appear to be an effect of a murky film stock or transfer to video, while in fact they serve as spaces for the apparition of the strangler to manifest. Congealing out of the blackness, the strangler, played by Charles Middleton, the man who created the role of Ming the Merciless in the *Flash Gordon* serials, becomes a shimmering ghost of a man, only becoming visible in the swamp's darkest spots. This pre-morphing effect of the strangler's materialization effectively transcribes the dark, brooding black-and-white horror of the villager's fears.

Lucky to have been saved at all, there are a few rough spots in the film print, with a bit of weaving a half hour into the film, and a few scratches and jumps, but the film's strength overcomes these small glitches. A very young Blake Edwards, before directing *10*, *Victor/Victoria* and *S.O.B.*, performs as a hopeful suitor for Maria's beauty, adding another reason to view this classic release from Image.

FANDO AND LIS

(aka Fando y Lis)
dir: Alejandro Jodorowsky
1967
Fantoma Films (DVD, 1999)

❑ There has never been a better time for the home video obscure film aficionado. The advent of DVD has brought many riches into our homes, and has created an archival situation that was previously only hinted at with laserdisc, although that bulky, heavy, and expensive medium still kept rare obscure films out of the living rooms of most Americans.

James Healey and his Fantoma Films went to every extreme possible to present Alejandro Jodorowsky's long, long lost film *Fando and Lis* in its most complete form on DVD, including the director's first full-length commentary, an eighty-seven-minute documentary *La Constellation Jodorowsky* and even a full-color reprint of the original eight-page brochure handed out upon the film's release. Previously available on only the murkiest of bootleg copies, with an image so warped it was barely possible to read the subtitles, this release can only breach a greater gateway for obscure foreign cinema on DVD.

Jodorowsky, best known for creating the midnight movie experience with *El Topo*, and continuing that tradition with the equally delirious *The Holy Mountain*, certainly began both of these adventures in cinema experience right here with *Fando and Lis*.

Crowds following individuals, strange rituals, mystic experience, death to rebirth, and more themes of Jodorowsky's work are crowded into this ninety-six-minute film. Reminiscent of *Erendira* at times, David Lynch at others, and the director himself most of all, *Fando and Lis* is one of those rare moments you caught at the old repertory theater before they tore it down for the multiplex.

Lis eats a flower. The story of the city of Tar is read over the illustrated credits. A burning piano is knocked over again and again. Mud bathers gather and rise at the base of a mountain. A little doll's crotch has an opening jabbed in and a snake is put in the new hole.

I think I'll stop here. Art film is too loose a term to describe what Jodorowsky is doing here. This is mysticism, alchemy, magic. And this DVD also boasts one of the richest commentaries ever released on DVD. Quite varied with references to the film itself, the thoughts behind the choices in the film, notes on the actors, and mentions of other events guiding the director's decisions, the commentary adds not only a greater understanding, but a greater appreciation for what the man is concocting.

Fully lucid and cogent in his 70s, the commentary makes a fine bridge to yet another treasure on the disc, Louis Mouchet's documentary.

Delving even further into Jodorowsky's 'constellation,' other portions of the man's life are presented, from Tarot card readings to group encounter sessions to comic book art and beyond. The documentary also includes interviews with Jean 'Moebius' Giraud, Marcel Marceau, Peter Gabriel and Fernando Arrabal.

The only drawback to this disc is a strobing effect that occurs while watching the film, although there is a disclaimer on the disc. Pardoning this light distraction, Fantoma's release of *Fando and Lis* is a milestone in the history of film preservation.

THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE

(aka L'ultima preda del vampiro)
dir: Piero Regnoli | 1960
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 1999)

❑ Made in the early days of French horror films, *The Playgirls and the Vampire* introduced a touch of sexuality to its simple plot, which has helped to put the film in a more historic context than if it were a straight horror tale. And the title itself is much more titillating than the film.

Finding themselves forced off the road in a violent thunderstorm, the five playgirls and their manager find themselves at the castle of Count Kernassy, who is not welcoming to the curvaceous beauties presented to him. Until, that is, Vera steps forward and instantly he recognizes the resemblance to his beautiful ancestor Margerhita. And, even further unknown to our soon-to-be damsels in further distress, he bears his own resemblance to his 200-year-old ancestor, a vampire who slumbers in the family's crypt.

The opening scenes of the crypt itself are possibly the creepiest moment in the film, with the vampire's hand creeping its way out of its stone-lidded coffin. The sparsely lit black and white hallways and rooms of the castle give it a sense of unease, but the inherent silliness of the bump 'n' grinders keeps the chills at constant bay. The film's decision to sway towards a humorous angle disallows whatever fear we have, and reduces the impact it might have had.

Then we must have a look at the dance numbers we get: one silly rehearsing session, and one prolonged, and unfinished, strip tease. A little more playgirl, a little more vampire, yeah. Instead the girls' manager is given more words and character than the girls themselves are. His leadership is a bigger part of the film than they are.

If the girls themselves were a bit more playful, had a bit more opportunity to be playful and sexy, I might've found more to recommend the film. But for those with an urge to have a greater history of the lineage of sex horror films, or who just really dig whatever few minutes of 50s chicks a-go-go-in' they can snare, a little crack of this coffin lid and you'll find what you're looking for.

Not as big a bombshell as their upcoming releases suggest, but it looks like there will be quite a few other titles in Image Entertainment's EuroShock Collection for DVD that will be taking up our shelf spaces soon.

DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT

dir: S.F. Brownrigg | 1973
VCI Entertainment (DVD, 2000)

☐ I must admit, I'm a big fan of the films of S.F. Brownrigg. The first film I caught of his was the fascinating *Keep My Grave Open.* I could not believe that this film had made it past my radar for so long. Camilla Carr had my instant attention, as did director Brownrigg. Not really 'horror', Brownrigg's work is actually much closer to the films of Mike and George Kuchar than to, say, the films of Andy Milligan.

Thanks to the mad dash to release DVD titles, much like the early-80s VHS boom, S.F. Brownrigg's 1973 directorial entry, *Don't Look in the Basement*, has found its way onto the versatile format. The earliest of the *Don't* movies that would continue in the 80s, this effort falls well after the brothers Kuchar, and the entire oeuvre of Herschell Gordon Lewis. Unfortunately, Brownrigg's reign of low-class art ended in the 80s with his 1986 film *Thinking Big*, which was nowhere near the strong exercises he produced with *Scum of the Earth* (aka *Poor White Trash Part 2*) or his own follow-up in the *Don't* line, *Don't Open the Door!*

Don't Look in the Basement opens with Dr. Stephens coaxing the Judge (Gene Ross, star of three other Brownrigg titles, and a bit player in a number of cult classics such as *Pennies from Heaven*, *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter*, and *Lost Highway*) to 'strike hard' against a log on the ground in front of him. Great Brownriggian close-ups of the Judge's sweaty face, further antagonized by a second, low-angle camera placement, sets us up for an axe to Dr. Stephens' skull when a nurse tells him she is leaving. Dr. Masters (Anne McAdams) hurries to calm the situation and grabs the axe from the Judge. Curiously, no one is punished for this event, and it's left to our imaginations what becomes of Dr. Stephens' corpse.

The rest of the film from this point on is basically the patients behaving as they do around the asylum. Betty Chandler as Allyson is constantly on the make with anyone she can attempt to turn on, but no one will accept her advances. She sheds her shirt and exposes her cleavage for a phone technician (who visits after the phone lines are mysteriously cut), the Judge, and others, to no avail. The pathos that she brings to this role is incredible. Actually, everyone in the film is incredible. Yeah, yeah, I will have my detractors on this, but these people really play their parts to the hilt. Dr. Masters is extraordinary, and Rosie Holotik as Charlotte Beale, the visiting nurse, really delivers a fear-filled character in this low-budget madhouse.

The gore scenes are a bit laughable at times, from the first axe blow to a tongue getting ripped out to the over-the-top finale, but it all adds up to more Brownriggian fun. I am not recommending this film to anyone who is expecting a chiller-thriller or gorefest. This film is for those patient enough to enjoy sweaty close-ups of deranged faces screaming or mooning for affection, and watching near non-actors explore their craft with the roles that Brownrigg has offered. I'd also highly recommend this film to devotees of Curt McDowell's *Thundercrack!* Not as much sex here, but plenty of insanity! The fullscreen transfer itself is fine, not an amazing DVD release, but much much better than any previous VHS version.

RABID DOGS

(aka Cani Arrabbiati, Semaforo Rosso)
dir: Mario Bava | 1974
Lucertola Media (DVD, 1998)

☐ On a technical par with the multi-million dollar restorations of suspense classic *Vertigo* and the loving treatment given *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, this very fine presentation of the great master Mario Bava's *Rabid Dogs* is given equal—if not even more precise—treatment and care than the aforementioned cinema classics.

Messrs. Blumenstock and Lucas have taken it upon themselves to present the Maestro's 'lost' film in the best way possible. Finding themselves with washed-out color footage, a missing opening sequence, and soundtrack and syncing problems, they did whatever was necessary to bring this lively document of Bava's directorial genius to the screen in an extremely powerful fashion.

Opening with the newly shot sequence of a crying woman silhouetted behind a sheet, *Rabid Dogs* quickly shatters this melancholic introduction with three ferocious hoodlums hijacking a weekly payroll from a man in a car, knifing him to death in the process, and then escaping to a parking garage. Closely followed by police, they grab two women and stab one in front of her horrified friend, causing the police to back away. They jump into a man's car and squeeze in next to a young, sick boy in the back seat. The sweat runs from brows, heartbeats and breathing quicken, and the desperation and pathos begin for a non-stop thrill ride that never lets up, even after the final frame flickers out, leaving an indelible impression on the viewer.

Almost the entire film takes place inside a moving car. Rather than go the Hollywood route by having a car that splits in half for easier camera movement, Bava has us right in the car with the sweaty hoodlums and terrified driver and female hostage. Close-up shots in closer quarters of the kidnappers' dirty, sweaty faces causing nervous unwanted excitement throughout, we're so close to the action we can damn near smell the killers' sweat. Their names evoke the fear they wish to cause: Blade and Thirtytwo, with Maurice Poli (of *Baron Blood*) in the cooler mastermind role of Doc. Even here, with Doc's incessant demands for his cohorts to cool down, further tension is stretched into the six passengers' plights—the three burglars want to escape to the country, the driver wants to get his son to the hospital, and the woman plain just wants OUT!

Toll booth workers, a surprise acquaintance at a food market, a woman whose car has broken down and needs a ride, and bumper-to-bumper traffic, combine with the actions and words of the two backseat killers, with their vile crotch-grabbing at the woman hostage and ash-tapping in the child's face, to create an increasingly hostile environment in the confines of the vehicle.

One wonders what direction Bava's career might have gone had this film seen the release for which it was originally intended, instead of being vaulted up due to a producer's death and financial concerns. The assumption is that we would've seen more action-oriented films and maybe even true international critical acclaim.

Except for a slight maybe-defect where one subtitle was onscreen for half a second ("Oh, Riccardo, you aren't jealous, are you?"), this is an amazing work from a few very dedicated film preservationists. From the newly shot opening all the way through the intensely researched liner-note extras at the end of the disc, and the brilliantly displayed poster artwork from other Bava films, this is an intense work of love and care. Very few films receive this sort of treatment and we're lucky to have had Tim Lucas and Peter Blumenstock working on the video release of this film. The subtitles deserve special mention as Mr. Lucas performed the translation himself, providing a much more natural, and therefore more believable, tone to the film, further enhancing this work rather than tossing if off with cheap quickie nonsensical titles.

This picture is an absolute must for anyone involved in tightly choreographed hard-action cinema. (For trivia's sake, Mario's son Lamberto receives a film credit as 'Auito Regista,' Italian for Director's Aid.)

REQUIEM FOR A VAMPIRE
(aka Requiem pour un Vampire, Caged Virgins, Virgins and Vampires, Dungeon of Terror)
dir: Jean Rollin | 1971
Image Entertainment
(DVD, 1999)

☐ One of Jean Rollin's most shining moments, Image Entertainment has treated us to this classic no-budget, ultra-French, sex/horror yarn in a newly transferred DVD release.

From the opening shot of young, blonde pig-tailed Marie-Pierre Castel in a clown suit, firing a gun at the car behind her, this film does not let up in either beautiful photographic tableau, mild action, or intense sexual sadism. After Marie-Pierre and her also clown-outfitted 'twin' Mireille Dargent escape their pursuers, their driver is shot and killed. They set him and the car on fire, finishing their escape by foot. They survive by various methods, most often using their supple bodies to bait middle-aged men. In one highly Rollinian scene, Marie-Pierre struts back and forth quite obviously until a mad man follows her, then chases her, into the nearby woods. Mireille robs his truck while he chases Marie-Pierre.

These tactics don't fare so well for the two young beauties once they enter the lair of The Last Vampire. After passing through a cemetery and attempting hiding, one falls into a grave and is almost buried alive by two gravediggers. After this debacle they find themselves in an old castle, and are captured by a saber-toothed female vampire in Gothic clothing. She holds them for her master, The Last Vampire, who spreads his cape and unleashes two vampire bats upon the girls, who are then hypnotically forced to march down to his torture room, where we are 'treated' to fifteen minutes of debauchery. All the women down here find themselves caught in chains and their clothes are ripped off while the Vampire's henchmen make their pleasure with their captives. Groovy, semi-psychedelic music glides throughout the red-tinted frames as the women scream at the rough handling by their abusers.

Although Jean Rollin himself feels that these scenes are only slightly sadistic, I'm certain that fans of women in peril will find some of what they're looking for here. This film was very personal for Mr. Rollin, one that he made in response to the amount of critical derision he had thus far received. The script was made up on the fly, like a tale-teller around a campfire attempting to scare the Girl Scouts. A fairly simple story of the girls' abduction into the world of the vampires is made most interesting with Rollin's trademark scattered skulls, old castles, and close-up shots of the two women's faces posing for the camera.

The transfer is acceptable but most likely due to the origin of source material, appears to have barely better image quality than a laserdisc, though nicely proportioned for a 1:66 letterboxing. A lot of the film actually takes place in the daytime, something which was difficult to spot in earlier bootlegs.

The DVD also includes the original theatrical trailer in both French and English, a still gallery, behind-the-scenes photos, a promotional materials section, and liner notes by Marc Morris.

SAN FRANCISCO BALL
dir: Jack Genero | 1971
Alpha Blue Archives (VHS)

☐ A total sleazefest made up mainly of a tableau of blood and rape in a waterfront warehouse, and bizarre actions taken by the kidnap victim's sister in her home. This 'film' truly has no redeeming value to anyone searching for critically laudable comments. But if for those inclined towards sadistic violence and rape pull out that Johnson, baby, 'cause this one's got the red paint, the ropes, and the scuzzy dudes.

Three hoodlums meet under the Golden Gate Bridge to discuss an upcoming crime. Karen prepares to leave for San Francisco to visit her friend Judy, much to the dismay of her boyfriend Steve, who has the week off. Karen arrives at Judy's home and the girl there, Sharon, acts strange and says that Judy has left and she doesn't know when she'll be back. Karen is confused. Cut to Judy, tied up and gagged with the three men standing around her. They want to collect $50,000 for Judy. While waiting for their plan to go into effect, the men rape the bound Judy, slapping her and taking her. She cries during most of the brutal fucking. One of the fuckers leaves to deliver a ransom note to Sharon.

Karen calls and leaves a message for Steve that something is strange. He gets the message but when he calls Sharon tells him that she and Judy have left for the summer cabin. Steve immediately leaves for San Francisco. Karen is kidnapped by the moustached man of the trio. The other hoodlum drops the note for Sharon while Steve sits by outside the apartment. Steve notices the man's van and follows him. Cut to the warehouse where Karen now joins the 'fun'. A rape orgy ensues with both girls crying all the while. They beat the two women and while the bearded man fucks Karen's face, Judy dies. Karen can't believe this is happening.

Low on clever camerawork and dynamic acting abilities, and also pretty lame in the story department, *San Francisco Ball* can lay no claim to an aesthetic sense beyond its trashy depiction of the rape of all three women of the film. But what is art when you've got violent, brutal rape? Maybe the red paint (aka blood) splattered all over the bodies of the women and the warehouse constitute an artistic sense. Who am I to make excuses for a tawdry, poorly shot, written, and acted sex and violence flick? It's got over half an hour of full-nude rape scenes, isn't that all you need to know?

ONCE UPON A BODY

dir: Sam Catah | 1969
Chellee Films/Alpha Blue Archives (VHS)

☐ The hip, psychedelic jazz score by Luristan, Inc. is the only thing that is consistently carried throughout this tawdry exploitation film. I wish I could give you even some idea of its storyline but it doesn't really have one. Little flashes of action give us the idea that there is a movie here but it's really nothing more than some loose sexual encounters tied together only by the people having them.

A bearded man in bed with a goldilocked blonde 'groovy' chick admonishes her 'freaky' ways. She calls him a square and leaves. Cut to the glory days of 42nd Street filled with people and open movie theaters (one marquee has Mario Bava's *Queen of Blood* on it!). A young man asks another for a cigarette and they head back to the hustler's pad for some nookie. The john shells out twenty-five dollars for some head.

The blonde chick tells her two friends about a 'fag' she knows, the hustler, with some money. For some reason this 'fag' likes to have women spend the night with him when they need a place to stay. The Greek woman takes the job and she spends the night with the guy and lets in the blonde chick who then rips off the guy's money. Blondie goes back to her other dark-haired girlfriend and they get it on to celebrate.

All of a sudden it becomes an orgy scene. The orgy breaks up and the short dark-haired girl gets her hands tied together with a belt and slapped. A guy from the hallway climbs in through the window and rapes the woman. She likes it. He tosses her a quarter when he's through.

The Greek girl masturbates in front of a mirror until blondie shows up and they shower together. Meanwhile, the short dark-hair goes back to her boyfriend's and acts snippy so he strangles her. The Greek girl is taking a bath when her radio falls in and electrocutes her. Blondie comes in and screams.

Blondie back in bed with the square. She's reformed?

I'm not sure what the point is of this little flick except to show off several nude bodies. The girls are quite well shaped and the men are hairy chauvinist pigs. Doesn't sound like that bad of a combination to me, though combined with the lapses of sexual action in *Once Upon a Body*, you may find the fast-forward button to be a welcome friend while viewing this picture.

HARDGORE

dir: unknown | 1974
Alpha Blue Archives
(VHS, mid-90s)

☐ A bearded man arrives at a hospital to take charge of Maria, a patient who suffers from necrophilia. A nurse shows her to a room and makes up the bed, bending over and showing off her pantied bottom. Maria immediately gets down on her haunches and strokes the nurse's rear end. A female encounter ensues. After moving into the bathroom for some further rug-munching, the nurse tells Maria to leave immediately and that the place is dangerous.

Maria is bored sitting alone in her room and finds a box containing two dildos. She thinks she'll "take advantage of it," and proceeds to masturbate with the longer of the two. While frigging herself, Maria hears a noise at the door and when she opens it the nurse stands there with her throat slit. Maria runs into the hall and a man in a pantyhose mask yanks her into a hallucinogenic room with various sex and violence image-flashes. She lays on a table and five men work her over. She sucks on a huge cock when a large blade comes in and slices the man's cock off, sending blood into her mouth.

The next morning the doctors wake her up and tell her she had a dream. She asks where her nurse is and she's told that she left that morning. Maria is assigned a new nurse and she pulls out some toys for the two. The generator for the vibrator gets possessed and the vibrator begins to smoke inside of the girl.

Maria nightwalks again into a psychedelic room. A man with a Satan mask presides over an orgy of spaced-out freaks who were in her dream the night before. They kindly pay attention to her and drag her into their activities. A man in a mask takes a woman with black hair into another room and bends her over so her head rests in the cradle of a guillotine. The man fucks her with his huge cock and, at a signal from Satan mask man, lets drop the blade. He cums hard as her head is lopped off.

Maria overhears two men talking about sacrificing her. She makes a noise in the hall and they drag her into a room splashed about with blood and filled with dead women. The doctor fucks her on bloody sheets.

Maria is tied up, hanging by her wrists when three spark-propelled dildos zoom over to her and shoot loads of sperm all over her. The scene suddenly shifts to a nurse who administers a dildo to Maria's cunt.

Another orgy scene ensues. Maria jumps up and grabs a big blade and kills Satan mask man and another sadistic guy. Another guy grabs her and beats her head in with a skull. The camera pans from her bloody head to a curved lit candle shoved in her crotch. Satan mask man lies dead next to her in the empty room.

Low on plot, heavy on violence and sex, *HARDGORE* delivers the cheap schlocky thrills that you should get from a film called *HARDGORE*. Who this film was originally intended for is a heavy question. Was this actually released in theaters? In today's era, where if a film's serial killer has a lisp, the film then must be banned or recut to avoid offending anybody, we're lucky to even find something like this on video. If naked people, blood and screaming are your thing, you would do no wrong to own a copy of *HARDGORE*.

AFTERMATH

dir: Nacho Cerdá | 1994
Luminous Film and Video Wurks (VHS)

☐ Shit, baby. I think I've fucking found god. How else could something so gorgeous, so luscious, so ravenously beautiful exist, if not for the guiding hand of our lord to work through Nacho Cerdá's brain and body to create this absolutely perfect work of art? If DaVinci was divine, Cerdá is the savior himself.

Beautiful music and photography lead us into a bloody scene of a disemboweled dog, guts and gore splayed out in a lovely composition resembling a Spin Art design created using only red, black, and brown.

The gorgeous exquisitry continues as a corpse is wheeled into a locker. A cross that was around the man's neck is handed to a crying couple in the waiting room.

We begin with a full nude male corpse as it is prepared for what appears to be an autopsy. The doctor slams his scalpel in the corpse's skull and removes the thick bone. The brain plops out and the hollow is cleaned out with a towel.

Another doctor with a second corpse pauses from his own work and glares at a curious hospital worker. Unnerved by the doctor's glare the kid leaves the area, allowing the doctor's dark gaze to focus on the other doctor plunging into the dead man's chest and drawing down from neck to crotch. The man is opened and his guts are removed. The doctor snips into several muscle layers and removes the heart. Curiously, he takes all the organs, including the man's brain, and lumps them all into the cadaver's chest, sewing its chest back up and zipping him shut. After a brief clean-up, the first doctor is finished.

The second doctor, the one with the dark glare, opens up his next assignment, a dead young woman, and pauses to admire her. He fondles her face. He slowly draws a knife across her profile and moves down across her left breast. He scratches her flesh with the knife. He draws back and begins plunging madly into her crotch area and fucks her chest up pretty bad. Once her chest and stomach are a platterful of grue, he reaches under his smock and frigs himself, falling to his knees at his powerful orgasm.

He pulls out his Nikon and photographs the assaulted corpse. He sets his camera up, drops his pants, and climbs on top of the ruined flesh, glancing up to make sure the camera is operating, before committing serious frottage a gore, pounding his engorged member as fast and hard as he can into the mottled meat. The camera clicks away.

He removes the woman's heart and shoves the rest of her organs back in, sews her chest together, and zips her up, much like the first doctor.

At home with the doctor we are treated to a nice little tying up of the plot elements, further enhancing our amusement and pleasure.

For absolute and totally committed lovers of sex and death, nothing comes anywhere near the full-on power of this film. The limp necrophilia of *Curdled* is only sour milk compared to the raging genius of Nacho Cerdá. No higher accolades can be heaped upon *Aftermath* save for whatever gifts the heavens may bestow upon him for creating this work for us mere mortals here on this lonely planet.

An absolute must-see. The only problem I'll have at Cerdá's altar is genuflecting with a scalpel, but I'm sure his camera would perfectly capture the sacrifice and I would end up in the sequel; anyone for after-*Aftermath*?

FRANKENSTEIN

dir: James Whale | 1931

Universal Studios Home Video

☐ In the name of cinema, now I know how it feels to be treated with respect as a filmgoer! While not exactly the exclamation previously silenced out of the film by early censors, film fans should be screaming something similar in appreciation for Universal's restoration of this true classic of cinema, a film that will be preserved and restored again and again for whatever new recording mediums arise.

One of the most exciting revelations of this latest restoration is the inclusion of a line that had been missing from the film since 1938, when the Hays Office ordered its removal from all prints. After Frankenstein's monstrous creation moves its hand ever so slowly against thunder and lightning, its creator maniacally shrieks, "In the name of God, now I know what it feels like to be God!" The last restoration showed Colin Clive mouthing the words, but the dialog was still overshadowed by the crashing thunder. While today we find little offense at such a line (or at least those reading this review I'm sure), there were many, many cuts imposed on the film, the most being the censor board in Kansas City, MO, which ordered a record thirty-two cuts! Some countries banned the film entirely. Nevertheless, the film still ended up as one of 1932's highest-earning films, grossing over fifteen million upon its initial release (the film's premiere was held at the Mayfair Theater in Manhattan, Dec. 4, 1931).

Beyond the thrilling discovery of the missing piece here and there, we can triumphantly state that Universal's new video release is one of the more remarkable restorations we've yet seen. No more flickering, scratchy, grainfests in darkness. This film is crisp and clear. There are a few little bits that they could've spent an extra few months on for an even cleaner look, but there is little to complain about here. In fact the film is so clear, you can even see ripples in the night sky backdrops! Background artwork, castle and lab details, and more come to full, almost three-dimensional life, breathing in a wholly new experience of the picture.

The sound itself is also a remarkable improvement. Gone are the multitudinous pops and crackles of the old track, which reduced many lines to buckled utterances. This track is clear of all defects. Totally. Which I actually must mention. Although it is wonderful to just hear the film itself, no room tone was substituted for the pops in the original tracks, leaving us with emphatic, dead silence between lines, which almost makes the film sound like it was recorded in a studio at a later date. But this is the only complaint that can be made on this title.

A forty-five-minute documentary, *The Frankenstein Files: How Hollywood Made a Monster*, produced, written, directed, narrated, and hosted by horror film professor David J. Skal (with appearances by Sara Karloff, Rick Baker, and Ivan Butler) provides some knowledgeable insight on the film. The documentary uses a lower-quality transfer for its reprisals of footage of the film, showing how vast the difference is from the previous atrocities of video presentation we've had to sit through. Also included are commentary by film historian Rudy Behlmer; a strange, comedic short comprised of various scenes from *Frankenstein*, *Nosferatu* and *The Cat Creeps*; some excellent production notes; a 'moving' still gallery; and a trailer for the film.

A really quite impressive work from the folks at Universal. Needless to say, there is much excitement for the upcoming releases of *The Mummy*, *The Bride of Frankenstein* and *The Wolfman*.

AN AMERICAN CRIME

dir: Tommy O'Haver| 2007
First Look (Sitges screening)

☐ If Jack Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* didn't punish you enough, here's another nasty film based on the same harrowing true story: Tommy O'Haver's *An American Crime*. Reigning in many of the gorier details of the case, and forgoing *The Girl Next Door*'s literary and filmic device of having the narrator as one of the perpetrators, *An American Crime* goes directly to the court records to present its version of the events.

Opening with the 1965 court trial, the film smoothly shifts into the story of the Likens parents about to travel with a carnival for work, leaving their daughters Sylvia (Ellen Page) and Jennifer Likens (Hayley McFarland) with Gertrude Baniszewski (Catherine Keener) and her six children—complete strangers—for twenty dollars a week. When Gertrude's eldest daughter, Paula (Ari Graynor), meets with her married older lover, he gets violent with the girl, and to save her the brutality, Sylvia reveals Paula's pregnancy. Paula, furious that her secret is out, tells her mother that Sylvia's been spreading lies about her. And Gertrude's punishments begin.

Enlisting the assistance of her children, Gertrude's frustrations at being unable to control their behavior are unleashed upon poor Sylvia, until she is literally thrown into the basement, and becomes a punching bag, rape and torture victim not just for the Baniszewski children, but for several neighbor kids as well.

The early part of the film is aglow with the warm tones of Americana. Slicked-back hair, finned cars, and pretty girls getting into trouble, images which later become blackened by flesh-smoldering dank cigarette smoke. This more 'realistic' version of the crime has even more of a 'next door' feeling as the filmmakers spend more time out of the basement and in the neighborhood and town than *TGND*'s transgressors and victims. It also leans more on the psychological imbalance between the perpetrator and her victim, and their unfortunate torturous dynamic. In contrast to most true-crime tellings, Gertrude is not perceived as an isolated monster, but as a woman with problems. Severe problems.

Page breathes full-dimensioned life into the doomed young Sylvia and Keener's Gertrude is fascinating and fearful. Behind her eyes dwells a deeply disturbed woman, though Keener never elicits a monstrous façade. A most astonishing delivery is her courtroom response to the kids' accusations. Here, we watch denial at work—someone actually unable to take responsibility for their crime due to psychological defense.

Due to its somewhat clinical approach to such a dark subject, *An American Crime* will likely repel most viewers. Dark, dark, dark and brutally close to home, it's nevertheless essential viewing if only to not forget dear Sylvia Likens, an innocent child destroyed by an all too human monster, and to also take a look in that mirror ourselves.

THE DEVILS

dir: Ken Russell | 1971
(Angel Digital bootleg)

☐ Oliver Reed at his sexiest as a priest accused of congress with the devil and subjected to various tortures to pull out a confession amongst a bevy of repressed nuns. While he may not be sharing brews with Satan, Reed's Father Grandier is somewhat of a louse, impregnating a makeup-painted teen and leaving her to her own devices. Not good when you've already made enemies, and sadly for Grandier, Vanessa Redgrave's Sister Jeanne is a bit hot under the habit and it's oh so much easier to blame the hot, untouchable can't-have Urbain Grandier for those late-night itches. Derek Jarman's sets are an incredible hearth for Ken Russell's demonic fire and frame after frame oozes with sumptuous unease. Grandier walking on the water for the prostrated Redgrave is salivation central, and Peter Maxwell Davies' wild raucous score furthers the flames. Sister Jeanne's cleansing with a very large bellows and wonder elixir, the frenzied naked nuns screaming in the chambers, and Grandier's melting flesh are just a few of the retina-burning mindscapes Russell quite fortunately silver-halided for the world. Of course the biggest crime has nothing to do with the Devil, but that the only releases of this film are a pan and scan domestic VHS and a 1:77-trimmed UK VHS. Channel 4 broadcast the long-thought-gone 'Rape of Christ' sequence and the only copy is a very poor bootleg. An extremely deserving-of-DVD-special-edition important cinema landmark.

[INDEX]

3rd Avenue El 415
10 543
13th Street Theatre 150
20 Million Miles to Earth 76
30 Claws 410
50,000 B.C. 410
123 Depravity Street (pub) 145
2001: A Space Odyssey 392, 399
Abbott, Bruce 134
Acanthus (band) 538
AC/DC (band) 502
Ace Ventura: Pet Detective 260
Ackerman, Forrest J. 535
Adams, Ansel 457
Adamson, Barry 305
Addiction, The 137
Adjani, Isabelle 533
Aes-Nihil, John 43
Aftermath 548, 549
Agassi, Andre 261
'agnès b.' 392
Aguilera-Hellweg, Max 519
Akin, Gwen 185
Aladdin Hotel 371
'Alex Soul Dancer' 480
Alice 535
Alice in Wonderland (pub) 456
Alice's Restaurant 171
'Alien Comic, the' (see also Murrin, Tom) 480
Aliens 130
Allen, Woody 139
Allin, G. G. 52, 57
All Night Long 2: Atrocity 526
All Night Long 3: The Final Chapter 526, 527
All of Me 316, 331
All Tomorrow's Parties 464
Alpha Blue Archives 546, 547
Alphaville 300
Altar (band) 476
Althans, Bela 51
Altose, Kenneth 371
A&M Records 471
Amazing Colossal Beast, The 77
'Amazing Dunninger' (see Dunninger, Joseph)
'Amazing Human Pincushion' 61, 67, 68
'Amazing Lifto' 70
Ambarchi, Oren 476
Amelia, Ina 436
American Film Institute (AFI) 512
American Heart 201
American Nightmares 43, 142
American Psycho 326
Amok Books 510
Amos, Emil 464
Amos, Tori 450, 457
An American Crime 550
An Inconvenient Truth 457
Anchor Bay Entertainment 190, 264, 516, 525, 529, 530, 531–533
Andalusian Dog 397
Anderson, Greg 462, 466, 467
Andy Warhol's Dracula (see *Blood for Dracula*)
Andy Warhol's Frankenstein (see *Flesh for Frankensten*)
Angelika Film Center 378
Anger, Kenneth 524
Anguish 531
Anka, Paul 177
Anomalous Records 464, 471
Another Day in Paradise 325
Anthony, Carl 535
A-Pix Entertainment 538, 539
Apocalypse Culture (pub) 101
Applause Books 97
Apple Corps 286
Applegate, Christina 441
Apple theater 71
Araki, Gregg 495
Aranum Entertainment 439
Arau, Alfonso 290
Architecture of the O. M. Theatre, The (pub) 217
Argento, Dario 92, 431
Army Medicine in Vietnam 47, 88
Arnold, Skip 497
Arquette, Rosanna 263
Arrabal, Fernando 274, 276, 279, 290, 543
Ashbery, John 335
Askwith, Robin 540
'Asparagus Valley Cultural Society' (performance) 167, 168, 170
Asterix 387
Asterix and Cleopatra 387
Astro-Zombies 371, 373
At Close Range 137
Atkins, Pete 523, 524
Attila (band) 474
Auf Der Mar, Melissa 453
Au Revoir Les Enfants 171
Automobile Graveyard, The (pub) 279
Avaleuses, Les (see *Female Vampire*)
Avary, Roger 202
Awful Dr. Orlof, The 266, 521
Aye Aye Captain (band) 454
Bachman, Richard 519
Back in Black (album) 502
Back to the Future 501, 502
Backward Swing, The 512
Bacon, Francis 183, 230
Bad Lieutenant 533
Bad Taste 45, 47, 52
Bagg, Billy (see also Lustig, Bill) 204
Bagge, Peter 33, 448, 449
Baise-moi 398
Baker, Rick 549
Balch, Anthony 540
Balloon theater 480
Bally's Entertainment 176, 177
Balun, Chas. 35, 40, 41, 43, 75–100, 517
Balzac, Honoré de 133
Bambi 31
Bamboo House of Dolls 524
Band, Charles 85, 93, 125
Baniszewski, Gertrude 550
Baniszewski, Paula 550
Barany, Leslie 338
'Barbati's Pan' event 464
Bardem, Javier 538, 539
Bare-Breasted Countess, The (see *Female Vampire*) 520, 521, 530
Barfly 395
Barker, Clive 76, 327, 523, 524
Barlow, Ray 370
Barnes & Barnes (band) 504
Baron Blood 545
Barrel Entertainment 527, 528
Barrett, K. K. 486
Barr, Jean-Marc 252, 263
Barrymore, Drew 454
Bartel, Paul 100
Barth, John 320
Bartholomew, Tessa 35
Bartok, Dennis 47
Bartsch, Jürgen 55
Bassett, J. D. 402
Batman (pub) 405
Batman Returns 137
Baudelaire, Charles 320
Baudrillard, Jean 318
Bava, Lamberto 531, 545
Bava, Mario 517, 522, 536, 537, 545, 547
Bay of Blood 522
Beales, Edith 497
'Beard, The' (performance) 269
Bear, The 121
Beast, The 525
Beatles, the (band) 77, 286, 288
Beautiful People, The (track) 296
Beckett, Samuel 281
Beckford, William 132
Becoming Men 332
Beethoven, Ludwig van 164
Behlmer, Rudy 549
Belle et La Bête, La 281
Bellucci, Monica 387, 400
Bénazéraf, José 521
Bennett, Tony 375
Ben (track) 504
Beruf Neonazi 50
Bergman, Ingmar 137
Berle, Milton 406
Berlin Alexanderplatz 264, 266
Berman, Shelley 365
'Bernard of Hollywood' 368
Bernardo, Paul (Ken and Barbie killers) 110
Bernard, Susan 368
Besat 256
Best of Guinea Pig, The (see also *Guinea Pig*) 95
Beyond, The 92, 98, 517, 532, 533
Big Brother 519
Big Mess (see also Went, Johanna) 494
Big Problem ≠ The Solution. The Solution = Let It Be., The (album) 504
Bilson, Danny 125
Bird, Daniel 533
Bishop, Raymond J. 518
Bissette, Steve 84, 95
Bitches, The 30
Björk 250, 260, 312
Black Album, The (album) 465
Black Cat films 524
Black Dahlia, The 296, 300, 301

Blackest Heart Entertainment 517, 531
Black One (album) 474
Black, Robert 110
Black Sabbath (band) 538
Black, Shane 134
Black Sunday 536, 537
Blade Runner 524
Blair, Linda 518
Blanchard, Françoise 532
Blast Books 518
Blatty, William Peter 518
Bleacher Bums 120, 121
Bled to Death (pub) 84, 98
Bliznick, Jay 35
Block, Cyrus 40
Blood Feast 534
Blood for Dracula 249, 259–262, 266, 269
Blood Organ 212
Bloody Best of Deep Red (pub) 83
Bloody Novel (pub) 528
Blue Underground 191
Blue Velvet 260
Blumenstock, Peter 522, 537, 545
Body Shop (venue) 365
Body Snatchers 119, 128, 129, 136
Body Without Soul 331
Bolshoi Ballet 177
Bond, James 261, 289
Bonnie and Clyde 171
Bookwalter, J. R. 45
Boone Brothers, The 531
Boone, Martin 531
Boone, Mitchell 531
Boris (band) 476, 477
Borowczyk, Walerian 268, 521–532
Boswell, Simon 431, 438
Bouche de Jean-Pierre, La 393
Bowdern, William S. 518
Bowie, David 221
Bowling for Columbine 333
Brabec, Jaroslav 528
Bradley, Doug 524
Brady, Ian 110
Braindead 100, 396
Brainwashed Brainwaves festival 471
Bram Stoker's Count Dracula (see *Conde Drácula, El*) 520
Brandauer, Klaus Maria 269
Brando, Marlon 268
Brass Rail (venue) 359
Braunstein, George 202
Brawlin' Broads 531
Brazil 139
Breton, André 276, 280
Breyer, Lady Jaye 226
Bride of Frankenstein, The 549
Bride of Re-Animator 124
Bridges, Danny 104
Brillstein, Bernie 171
Brion Gysin Reader, The (pub) 333
British Film Institute (BFI) 518
Broken Cookies 254, 264, 271
Brook, Peter 132
Brooks, Conrad 535
Brooks, Joseph 494
Brothers, David 502, 512, 513
'Brother Theodore' 150–161
Browning, Tod 507
Brownrigg, S. F. 544
Brown, Steve 25
Brown, Tom 45
Bruce, Lenny 116
Bruce, Lisa 148
Brunvand, Jan Harold 428
Brus, Günter 114, 212
Brute Force 197
Bryld, Eigil 256
Buffy the Vampire Slayer 248
Buisson, Pierre 316, 318
Bulger, James 110
Bullshit 163
Bully 325
Bumbershoot festival 484
Buñuel, Luis 388, 397, 507
'Burbs, The 152, 152, 347
Buried Alive 164
Burke, Robert 430, 433, 435
Burke's Law 365
Burnett, Carol 367
Burning Witch (band) 467, 472
Burr, Jeff 85, 86
Burroughs, William 230, 236, 237, 320, 325, 332, 333, 540
Burton, Tim 540
Butcher's Pride (pub) 78, 86
Butler, Ivan 549
Butterfly 19
Buttgereit, Jörg 42, 43, 54, 91
Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, The 529
Cadinot, Jean-Daniel 316, 318, 330
Café Flesh 56
Café Sophie (venue) 66
Caged Virgins (see *Requiem for a Vampire*) 546
Cage, Nicolas 430
Cagney, Jimmy 418
Cahill, Tim 525
Caidin, Eric 97
Caine, Michael 256
Caltiki, the Immortal Monster 76
Cameron, James 130, 131
Cani Arrabbiati (see *Rabid Dogs*) 545
Cannes film festival 147, 396
Cannibal Holocaust 100, 530
Cannibal Ferox 530
Cannon films 284
Canongate books 316
Careful 460
Carey, Timothy 507
Carlson, Dylan 471, 475
Carne 389, 391, 392, 396, 398
Carnegie Hall 150, 305
Carnival in Venice 331
Caro, Marc 398
Carradine, Keith 10
Carr, Camilla 544
Carrey, Jim 118
Carrie 533
Carroll, Lewis 535
Carson, Adrian 523
Carson, Kit 415
Carstensen, Margit 513, 514
Carter, Chris 226
Carver, Lisa 439, 444
Carving Meat 534
Caslo, Ricky 30
Cassavetes, John 507
Cassel, Vincent 385
Casso, Ricky 536
Castellari, Enzo G. 203
Castel, Marie-Pierre 546
Castle Freak 134
Castle of Frankenstein (pub) 518
Castle of Otranto, The 132
Castle, William 118
Cat in the Brain 91
Catah, Sam 547
Cat Creeps, The 549
Cates, Gil 416
Cates, Joe 416, 417
Cats 307
CBGB (venue) 449
Cecil B. Demented 274
Celebration, The 251
Center of Contemporary Arts 67
Cepek, Petr 535
Cerdá, Nacho 548, 549
Chaleurs 331
Chambermaid on the Titanic, The 531
Chandler, Betty 544
Chant d'Amour, Un 56
Charlie's Angels 502, 507
Charlie's Family 38, 43, 44, 45
Chattaway, Jay 202
Chellee films 547
Chelsea, Robert 432
Cher 248
Chicago Tribune (pub) 522
Chicago Underground film festival 35, 274
Chikatilo, Andrei 55
Chinas Comidas (band) 486
Chodrin, Pima 456
Cho, Margaret 454
Chrisemer, Wier 164, 165, 166, 168
Christopherson, Peter 226, 329, 471
Chunk Blower 35, 39–41, 43, 536
Chunk Blower (pub) 78, 79, 81, 82, 86
Chunkblow Press 83
Church of the SubGenius 66, 70
Cinefantastique (pub) 41
Cinema Distributors of America 413
Cinematic, the (venue) 494
Cinemax 541
CineTel films 203
Circus 2000 A.D. (band) 143
Cisneros, Al 464
Citizen Kane 540
City of the Living Dead 194
Clarke, Shirley 496
Clark, Larry 325
Classic Comics 133
Closer (pub) 323, 333
Clowes, Dan 449
Club Fuck (venue) 494
Cobain, Frances Bean 454
Cobain, Kurt 453
Cock-Strong (performance) 480
Cocteau, Jean 274, 281
Cohen, Larry 128, 129, 192
Cohn, Sam 171
Coil (band) 226, 329
Cold Meat Industry 466
Cold Metal (track) 425
Coleman, Ornette 496
College of Physicians of Philadelphia 518
Collins, Joan 265
Collins, Max Allan 204
Combat Shock 38, 43, 142, 143, 147, 148
Comfort and Critique (pub) 101
Comic Book Tattoo (pub) 450
ComicCon 450
Connery, Sean 261
Connoisseur's Guide to the Contemporary Horror Film, The (pub) 83, 97
Constellation Jodorowsky, The 280, 543
Contemporary Arts Gallery 484
Controlled Bleeding (band) 101
Conversation, The 131
Cooper, Alice 102, 113
Cooper, Dennis 110, 314–337, 475, 477
Cooper, Gary 438
Coppola, Francis Ford 131, 433
Cop Shoot Cop (band) 27, 34
Corman, Roger 125
Corso, Gregory 280
Cosmic Trigger (pub) 65, 399
Costa, Marianne 291–294
Costner, Kevin 126
Coulouris, George 540
COUM Transmissions (performance) 228, 229, 231, 243
Cox, Alex 529, 530
Cracktown 147–149

Cramps, the (band) 489
Crank 74
Crash 148, 334
Crash, Darby 487
Cravate, La 274
Craven, Wes 522
Creation Books 101, 521
Cridland, Tim 59
Crime Wave 41
'Crispin Hellion Glover's Big Slide Show' 499, 506
Critters V 86
Cronenberg, David 40, 148, 305, 542
Cronyn, Hume 197
Cross, Harley 539
Crossroads Cinema 191
Crowley, Aleister 4, 65, 473
Crowley, Matt 59, 66, 70
Cruel Tricks (pub) 178
Crumb, Robert 443
Cuckoo Clocks from Hell, The (see also *Last House on Dead End Street, The*) 93
Cugat, Xavier 406
Cunningham, Chris 394
Curdled 549
Cure, the (band) 455
Curse of the Living Dead (see *Demoniacs, The*) 539
Curtis, Jack 401, 410
Cushing, Peter 125
D'Agosta, Joe 203
Dahmer, Jeffrey 90, 111, 326
Dakota, Eric 61
Dall, Bryin 244, 248
D'Amato, Joe 92
Dancer in the Dark 250, 260
Dance with the Devil (aka *Perdita Durango*) 431, 538, 539
Daniel, Dennis 94, 95, 115
Dante, Joe 155, 535
Daoud, Mohammed 434
D'Aram, Philippe 532, 541
Darcy, Dame 439–461
Dargent, Mireille 539, 546
'Dark Brothers' 31
Dark Half, The 76
Dark Sky films 401
Dave's World 120
Davidson, Carson 415
Davies, Peter Maxwell 550
DaVinci, Leonardo 81
Davis, Daniel 532
Davis, Gloria 530
Davis, Mitch 377, 528
Dawn of the Dead 44, 96
Dawson, Anthony 266
Day the Earth Stood Still, The 76
DC Comics 405, 406, 410, 502
D-Day 263
Dead Alive (see also *Braindead*) 526
Dead and Married (see also *She's Back*) 149
Deadbeat at Dawn 31, 35, 36, 38, 42–45, 54, 56, 536
Dead Kennedys (band) 77, 489, 529
Deadman (pub) 401, 406
Dead of Winter 171
Dead Ringers 40
Dean, James 259
Death by Doll (band) 454
Death Warmed Up 45
Debtors, The 256
Deep Red 36, 75, 83, 85, 91, 94, 97, 98, 100
Deep Red (pub) 77, 78, 83, 86, 94, 97, 100, 517
Deep Red Alert (pub) 83
Deep Red Horror Handbook (pub) 97, 100
de la Huerta, Paz 516
de la Iglesia, Alex 538
Delicatessan 398
de Marco, Don Juan 268
de Meo, Paul 125
DeMille, Cecil B. 273, 276, 278
Demoniacs, The 539
Demoniaques, Les (see *Demoniacs, The*) 539
Demonic Toys IV 84
Demon Lover 97
Demons 531
Deneuve, Catherine 250
Depp, Johnny 268
de Rais, Gilles 268
de Sade, Marquis 319, 320, 334, 396
Descent (pub) 465
Designing Women 120
de Souza, Steven E. 120
Despuentes, Virgine 398
'Destruction and Art' (performance) 212
'Destruction of Man' (performance) 221
Detachable Penis (track) 27
Detmer, Mell 475
Devil Has Six False Teeth, The (see also *Six Teeth, The*) 263
Devils, The 126, 550
Devo (band) 455
Diablesses, Les (see *Demoniacs, The*) 539
Diamonds are Forever 500
Diana, Mike 113, 114
DiCaprio, Leonardo 268
Dickson, Bob 148
Die Hard 120
Dien, Casper Van 259
Dillon, Matt 203
Dimension 252
DiPaolo, Michael 524, 525
Dirt, Richard 457
Dirty Girls, The 541
Disney, Walt 178
Divine 6–21, 481
Döblin, Alfred 266
Doda, Carol 168
Dodd, Westley Allan 110
Dog Day Afternoon 15
Dogme 251, 254, 256, 257, 263, 264, 290, 300
'Doll Game' 453
Doll Squad, The 365, 371
Domingo, Placido 222
Dømkirke (album) 466
Dommedagsnatt (album) 466
Donne, John 89
'Donner Party' 44
Don't Look in the Basement 544
Don't Open the Door! 544
Doom Patrol, The (pub) 401, 405, 418
Doomsdayer 261
Doors, the (band) 77
Doper 44, 536
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion (venue) 501
Dostoevsky, Fyodor 382, 391
Double en Jeu 316
'Double-O Void' (see *00 Void*)
Douglas, Alan 286
Downey, Lesley Ann 110
Doyle, Christopher 256
Dracula (see also *Andy Warhol's Dracula*; *Conde Drácula, El*) 535
Dracula (pub) 131
Drake, Arnold 401–418
Drake, Christopher 413
Drake, Ervin 415, 416
Driller Killer, The 204, 533
Dr. Jekyll and the Women 264, 525
Drum (pub) 430
Dubeat-E-O (band) 491
Dugan, Brian 111
Duke, Daisy 441
Dunaway, Faye 395
Dungeon of Terror (see *Requiem for a Vampire*) 546
Dunninger, Joseph 182
Dunn, Randall 462, 468, 475
Dunn, Sam 476
DuPre, Tiger 360
Dust Devil 420, 421, 423, 424, 426–429, 431, 434, 435, 437, 438
Dworkin, Andrea 52, 111
Dwyer, R. Budd 88
Dylan Dog festival 82, 90
Earth (band) 468, 471, 472, 475, 476
Earth Vs. the Spider 77
Eastwood, Clint 428, 430
Eaton, Marion 23, 56
Eccentric Lives and Peculiar Notions (pub) 72
Eddie Presley 85
Edel, Alfred 54
Edison, Thomas 100
Edwards, Blake 543
Egos Have Landed, The (pub) 425
Egoyan, Atom 309, 396
Eisner, Will 407
Eiszeit-Kino (venue) 48, 51
El Conde Drácula (*Bram Stoker's Count Dracula*) 520
'El Duce' 492
Element of Crime, The 252, 257
Elfman, Richard 259
Elite Entertainment 540
El Topo 274, 278, 284–286, 290, 292, 543
Elvira 453
Emperors (band) 466
Empire Pictures 125
End of Days 251, 265
End of Violence 266
Endurance 519
Engine Kid (band) 466
'Enigma, the' 70
Enquirer, The (pub) 15
Enter the Void 377, 499, 516
Entombed (band) 466
Epidemic 252, 271
Eraserhead 391, 397
Erendira 543
Erik the Viking 139
Erotikill (see *Female Vampire*) 520, 530
Essential Cinema (pub) 4, 23
Estevez, Emilio 529
Europa, Europa 257
Even Cowgirls Get the Blues 257
Even Dwarves Started Small 516
Everson, William K. 542
Evil Dead, The 45, 77, 204
Evil Dead II 45, 77, 526
Examiner, The (pub) 157
Executions 400
Exit (pub) 33
Exorcist, The 76, 193, 307, 518
Exorcist III 435
Exorsisters, The (pub) 461
Expert, The 192, 194, 197–199, 200
'Exploring Psychic Powers Live' (performance) 181
Eyes Wide Shut 382
Eyes without a Face (see *Yeux Sans Visage, Les*) 520
Eyler, Larry 104
FAB Press 522
Faces of Death 400
Factsheet Five (pub) 65
'Fakir Musafar' 57
Fales library 323, 327
Fall of Angels (pub) 465
Fallout (band) 464
Family, The (pub) 79
Fando and Lis 276, 280, 284, 290, 543
Fando y Lis (see *Fando and Lis*)
Fangoria (pub) 77, 84, 91, 97, 99, 119, 191, 249, 517
'Fango Weekend' 78
FantaCo 83, 97, 99, 100
Fantagraphics Press 439, 443, 448, 450
Fantasia 377
Fantasia festival 528

Fantasticks, The 184
Fantasy Film Memory (pub) 517
Fantoma films 543
Farmer, Donald 93
Farrell, Perry 68
Fascination 541
Fassbinder, Rainer Werner 249, 257, 264, 266, 393, 507, 514
Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill! 348, 367, 370, 374, 375
Fata Morgana 516
Father, Son and the Holy Ghost (band) 143
Faust 90, 523, 535, 536
Fear and Desire 392
Fears (pub) 4
Fellini, Federico 507
Female Vampire 530
Feral House books 72, 510
Ferrara, Abel 128, 137, 204, 533, 534
Fielding, Amanda 72, 73
Fields of the Nephilim (band) 423, 424
Field, Wrigley 120
Fight Club 396
Film Editors Society 415
Film Evil (pub) (see *Deep Red Horror Handbook, The*) 97
Film Threat Video Guide (pub) 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, 35, 36, 44, 45, 91–94, 98, 536
Finger, Bill 405
Fingered 27, 28, 34, 48, 56
Finley, Karen 493
'Finny Foot Affair, The' (see *Man from U.N.C.L.E., The*) 365
'Fire Walking and Decapitation Seminar' 471
Fisher, Carrie 149, 435
Flaming Creatures 56
Flash Gordon 282, 542
Flash Of The Blade (track) 425
Flash, The 125
Fleck, John 493
Flesh 251
Flesh Eaters, The 401, 410–413, 415, 416, 418
Flesh for Frankenstein 249, 260
Flesh Gordon II 40
Flipside (pub) 485
Fluffer, The 495
Fly 286
Fly, The 40, 126, 394, 495
Fly II, The 40
Flying Saucers Over Hollywood: The Plan 9 Companion (pub) 535
Foetus (band) 471
Follies theatre 362, 365
Forbes, Howard 4, 465
Forbidden, The 523
Force the Hand of Chance (album) 231, 232
For Love or Money 260
Forman, Milos 507
Fortress 128
For Whom the Bell Tolls 438
Fox and His Friends 264
Fox, Michael J. 260
'Fox Sisters, the' 182
Franco, Jess 91, 266, 520, 521, 530, 537, 538
Franju, Georges 520
Frankenstein 77, 85, 549
Frankenstein Files: How Hollywood Made a Monster, The 549
Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster 500
Franz, Dennis 120
Freeman, Morgan 126
French, Samuel 121
Friday the 13th Part IX 77
Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter 501, 502, 544
Friedkin, William 518
Friedman, David F. 534, 535
Frightful Fairytales (pub) 461
Frisk 328, 330
Frisk (pub) 316, 320, 324–326, 328, 330, 333
Frissons des Vampires, Les (see *Shiver of the Vampires*)
From Beyond 45, 77, 115
Frontline 337
Frontline Assembly (band) 536
Frumkes, Roy 145, 146
Fulci, Antonella 517
Fulci, Lucio 53, 75, 194, 517
Fu-Ling, Wang 524
Funeral Party (pub) 4, 75, 163, 439
Funhouse, The 93
Furlong, Eddie 201
Gabriel, Peter 543
Gacy, John Wayne 90, 103, 104, 144
Gaeta, John 437
Galás, Diamanda 305, 490
'Galatea: The Statue That Came To Life' (performance) 359, 360
Gale, Bob 503
Games of Paris 331
Gammelsaeter, Runhild 466, 467
Gandolfini, James 203, 538
Garage (venue) 472
Gardner, Ava 539
Gardnere, Vincent 542
Garland, Judy 19
Garry Shandling Show, The 171
Gasoline Alley 147, 148
Gasoline (pub) 439, 445–447, 450, 451, 454, 459, 460, 461
Gates of Hell, The 91, 517
Gate, The 346
Gatewood, Charles 70
Gecht, Robin 103, 110
Gehry, Frank 309
Genero, Jack 546
Geraldo 45
German Chainsaw Massacre, The 54
Germs, the (band) 489
Get Smart 319
Ghosts of Grey Gardens 497
Ghoulies II 125
Gibson, John 296, 303
Gifford, Barry 538
Giger, H. R. 131
Gilded Cage (venue) 361
Gilliam, Terry 139
Ginsberg, Allen 280
Giovinazzo, Buddy 140–149
Giovinazzo, Ricky 142
Giraud, Jean 543
Girl from U.N.C.L.E., The 365
Girl in Gold Boots 371
Girl Next Door, The 550
Glen or Glenda 532, 535
Glover, Crispin 4, 498–516
Goatsnake (band) 472
Godard, Jean-Luc 134
God Bless Tiny Tim (album) 453
Godspeed You! Black Emperor (band) 305
Godstar (track) 234
Godzilla 76, 117
Goethe Institut 259, 514
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 535
Goettel, Dwayne 536
Goldblatt, Mark 131
Gondry, Michel 394
Good, Sandra 45
Gordon, Stuart 115, 117, 128, 134, 135
Gore, Chris 24, 94, 95
Goregasm 98
Gore Gazette (pub) 93, 97, 146
Gore Score, The (pub) 97
GoreZone (pub) 36, 41, 84
Gorotica 98
Gothic (pub) 338
Gothic Lolita (pub) 451
Go, Tura (track) 362
Gough, Michael 540
Governor, Mark 202
Goya, Francisco José de 520
Graham, Aimee 539
Grails (band) 464, 471
Grauerholz, James 333
Graynor, Ari 550
Greatest Show on Earth, The 365
Greco, Richard 147
Greenfield-Sanders, Liliana 496, 497
Green, Peter 147
'Green River Killer' 110
Grey Gardens 496, 497
Grey, Joel 184
Griffin, Merv 161
Griffith, D. W. 528
Grimmrobes (band) 472
Grimm, Timm (see Zamora) 59, 69
Gritos en la Noche (see *The Awful Dr. Orlof*)
Grizzly Man 516
Grodecki, Wiktor 331
Grolier Press 120
Grove Press 316
Guggenheim, John Simon 378
Guide (pub) 325, 326, 332
Guinea Pig 79, 86, 87, 94, 95, 98, 112
Gummo 531
Gysin, Brion 230, 234, 236, 237, 333, 540
Haarmann, Fritz 55
Hagen, Nina 264, 490
Haimson, Gil 369
Haji 368
Hall, John 24
Halloween VI 125
Hall, Scott 534
Hamburger Lady (track) 243
Hammer films 125, 434
Hammer, Lisa 439, 451
Hamm-Fürhölter, Uwe 48, 54
Handbook For Hot Witches (pub) 461
Hanks, Tom 155
Hansen, Gunnar 78, 86, 97
HARDGORE 547, 548
Hard Magic (track) 16
Hardware 423, 425–427, 429, 437, 438
Harlow, Jean 269
Harryhausen, Ray 76
Harry Potter (pub) 450, 460
Hartman, Lauren 496
Has, Wojciech 529
Hated 31, 52, 57
Haunting of Hill House, The 535
Haunting, The 76
Hawaiian Eye 365
Hayes, Isaac 194
Haynes, Todd 459
Hays Office 549
HBO 497
Headpress 4, 47, 519, 520, 527
Healey, James 543
Heartbeat in the Brain 72, 73
Heist, Eric 248
'Hell on Earth' event 88
Hellraiser 523, 524
'Hellzapoppin' (performance) 59
Hemingway, Ernest 89
Hendrix, Jimi 81, 480
Hen, Phillip 437
Lucas, Henry Lee 103
Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer 43, 79, 92, 394
Herbert West—Reanimator (pub) 118
'Hernandez Brothers' 449
'Herodiade, The' (performance) 222
Herz, Michael 142

Herzog, Werner 264, 266, 507, 516
Hess, David 523
He! Viva Dada 280
Hex, Or Printing in the Infernal Method (album) 475
Higgins, William 335
Highlander III 148
High Plains Drifter 428
High Times (pub) 33, 400
Hilton, Perez 444
Hindley, Myra 243
Hitchcock, Alfred 171
Hitler, Adolf 402
Hit List 191
Hoffman, Abby 71
Hole (band) 453
Holland, Agniewszka 257
Holliday, Hope 366
Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers 97
Holman, Steven 493
Holotik, Rosie 544
Holstrom, John 33
Holy Mountain, The 274, 280, 286, 287, 288, 543
Holy Sons (band) 464
Homes, A. M. 318
Homolka, Karla (Ken and Barbie killers) 110
Hong Kong Café (venue) 484, 485, 487
Hooper, Tobe 531
Hoover Hog, The (pub) 163
Hope, Bob 406
Hopper, Dennis 507
Horace (Odes) 181
Horn, Immo 436
Horror Holocaust (pub) 97
Horror Hospital 329, 330, 540
Horror Yearbook (pub) 83
Hot Honey 204
Houdini, Harry 166, 170, 183, 185
House By The Cemetery, The 517
House of Frankenstein 85
House of Re-Animator 135
How To Play In Traffic (pub) 179, 181, 182, 186
Hubbard, Jim 523
Hübler, Manfred 538
Hughes, Barnard 184
Human Duplicators, The 351
'Human Race, The' (performance) 117
Hu, Marcus 326, 495
Hunt, Seldon 462
Hustler (pub) 25, 32, 33, 34
Huysmans, Joris-Karl 132
Hyena (album) 479
Hyrtl, Joseph 186
Idiots, The 251, 252, 382
I Drink Your Blood 92
Iliad, The 238
Image Entertainment 529, 530, 532–536, 538, 539, 541–544, 546
Immagini di un convento (aka *Images in a Convent*) 92
Immoral Tales 525, 526
Immoral Tales (pub) 520, 521
I'm So Beautiful (track) 15, 16
Incidents in an Expanding Universe 423
In Cold Blood (pub) 102
'Incubator' (performance) 59, 65
Independence Day 193
Innocent Pictures 263
Inside 171
International Guerrilla 56
International Media Inc. 84
Ionesca, Eugène 281
I Racconti Immorali (see also *Immoral Tales*) 525
Irma La Douce 365, 367
Iron Maiden (band) 425
Irons, Jeremy 131
irr. app. (ext.) (band) 471
Irreversible 377, 385, 388, 389, 395, 398–400, 516
Island of Dr. Moreau, The 438
I Stand Alone 252, 377, 384
It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE. 499, 500, 502, 507, 510, 512, 515, 516
IT IS MINE 508, 516
It (pub) 318
It Rhymes with Lust (pub) 407
Jackie Brown 537
Jackson, Janet 521
Jackson, Michael 504
Jackson, Molly 525
Jackson, Peter 47, 52
'Jack the Ripper' 521
Jagger, Mick 420
Jamon Jamon 531
Jane Eyre (pub) 459, 461
Janos, Victor (aka Watkins, Roger) 93, 527
Japan Communications 527
Jarman, Derek 550
Jarmusch, Jim 476
Jason and the Argonauts 378
Jaynes, Julian 237
Jellinski, Manfred 91
Jett, Joan 492
Jewison, Norman 309
Jillette, Penn (see also Teller) 163–168, 170–174, 180
'Jim Rose Circus Sideshow' 59, 66, 69, 72
Jodorowsky, Alejandro 272–295, 400, 543
John Gibson Gallery 296
Johns, Daniel 330
Johnson, Jack P. 520
Johnson, Tor 535
John's Place (venue) 491
'Jonas Brothers' 491
Jonathan of the Night 146
Jones, Brian 233, 234, 235
Jones, Grace 19
Jones, Kitty 360
Josh White Jr. and The Irish Rovers (band) 116
Journet, Dominique 542
Jovicic, Radica 271
Juevos de Oro 531
Kafka, Franz 281
Kane, Bob 405
Kang, Eyvind 468
Karen Carpenter Story, The 459
Karloff, Boris 76, 77
Karloff, Sara 549
Kartheiser, Vincent 325
Kaufman, Lloyd 38, 142, 143
Keener, Catherine 550
Keep My Grave Open 544
Keitel, Harvey 533
Kerekes, David 4, 527
Kermode, Mark 518
Kern, Richard 22–34, 48, 50
Kerwin, William 534
Ketchum, Jack 550
Ketchum Video 36, 536
Keys to Tulsa 148
Khachaturian, Aram 165
Khanate (band) 472
Khruse, Khia Khan 166
Kiarostami, Abbas 507
Kier, Udo 249–271, 525
Kieslowski, Krzysztof 517
Killer Kane (see also *Ninth Configuration, The*) 435
Kincaid, Cindy 149
Kincaid, Tim 149
Kindertotenlieder (see KTL)
King Is Alive, The 251
Kingdom, The 260, 269
King Kong 76
King, Mike 43, 44, 536
King Missile (band) 24, 27
King of New York 137, 204
King, Stephen 40, 318, 519
Kinkel, Kip 324, 337
Kino im KOMM (venue) 48, 51, 52
Kino Video 535
Kinski, Klaus 264, 521
Kinski, Nastassja 203
'Kipper Kids' 490, 494
Kitchen, the (venue) 494
Klein, Allen 284, 286
Knitting Factory (venue) 305, 462, 473
Kooks (pub) 72
Korine, Harmony 392
Korman, Harvey 534
Kosleck, Martin 412, 414
Krafft-Ebing, Richard von 114
Kragh-Jacobsen, Søren 251
Kravavy román (pub) (see *Bloody Novel*)
Kray Twins (band) 423
Kristofferson, Kris 10
Krug & Co. (see also *Last House on the Left*) 523
KTL (band) 471, 475, 476, 477
Kubert, Joe 407
Kubrick, Stanley 252, 382, 392, 393, 507
Kuchar, George 23, 448, 544
Kuchar, Mike 23, 47, 82, 544
Kuei, Chin Hung 524
Kuhlbrod, Dietrich 54
Kurosawa, Akira 137, 423, 507
LACE (venue) 490
Lâcheur d'animaux d'élevage, Le 399
L.A. Confidential 301
Lahaie, Brigitte 541, 542
Laine, Frankie 406
La MaMa theater 480, 482
Lancaster, Burt 197
Landau, Martin 254
Landis, Bill 531
Landis, Chuck 365
Lane, Abbe 406
Lang, Fritz 507
LaRose, Rose 361
Larraz, José 521
Lassen, Andre 338–347
Last Trip to Harrisburg, The 257
Last Days of John Martin, The 536
Last House on Dead End Street, The 92, 523, 527, 528
Last House on the Left 522, 523
Last House on the Left Part II 522
Last Spring at Grey Gardens 496, 497
Last Year At Marienbad 521
Laughton, Charles 282
Laurel, Stan 181
Lautremont 320
Lavagnini, Massimo 517
LaVey, Anton 473
L. A. Weekly (pub) 327
Lazy (pub) 522
Leather Girls (see also *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*) 367
Lebel, Jean Jacques 276, 280
Led Zeppelin (band) 230
Leeb, Bill 536
Lee, Christopher 126, 261
Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires 434
Legion 435
LeGros, James 148
Leibowitz, Jim 194
Lemmon, Jack 366
Lemmy 426
Lemos, Paul 101
Lennon, John 286, 287, 288
Lenzi, Umberto 96, 530, 531
Lerner, Michael 531
Less Than Zero 320
Lester, Richard 123
Letterman, David 150,

157, 188, 503
Levine, Mike 25
Levring, Kristian 251
Lewis, Herschell Gordon 529, 534, 535, 544
Lewis, Jerry 406
Lewton, Val 542
Life is Hot in Cracktown 141
Life is Hot in Cracktown (pub) 141, 146
Life Sentences 142, 145, 147, 148
Lighthouse theater 47
Like A Virgin (track) 521
Likens, Jennie 550
Likens, Sylvia 550
Lindgren, Laura 518
Lindgren, Scott 518
Ling Soo, Chung 184
Little Lulu (pub) 406
Live on Broadway (album) 479
Living Dead Girl, The 532
'Living Theater, the' (performance) 480
Lloyd, Harold 358, 359
Locke, Nancy 19, 20
Lola 264
Lollapalooza 68
London Filmmakers Co-op 50
Lonely Lady, The 19
Long Beach State College 497
Lorenzo's Oil 82
Lorimar films 171
Lorre, Peter 184
Losers, The 368
Lost Highway 332, 544
Love, Courtney 454
Lovecraft, H. P. 118, 124, 135
Lovelace, Linda 107
Lovely Bones, The (pub) 325
Lovers 263
Loves of Irina, The (see *Female Vampire*) 530
Lowe, Rob 12, 15
Lucas, Tim 84, 90, 518, 530, 537, 538, 545
Lucertola Media 545
Lucio Fulci: Beyond the Gates (pub) 517
Ludwig, Allan 185
Lugosi, Bela 532, 535
L'ultima preda del vampiro (see *The Playgirls and the Vampire*) 543
Lumière and Company 531
Luminous Film & Video Wurks 548
Luna, Bigas 531
Lunch, Lydia 27, 34
Lund, Zoë (see also Tamerlis, Zoë) 533
'Lung Leg' 27
Lup, Daniel 435
Lure Of Tura, The (track) 362
Luristan, Inc. (band) 547
Lustig, Bill 145, 149, 190–204
Luxor hotel 178
Lydon, John 425
Lynch, David 391, 397, 507, 508, 516, 538, 543
Macbeth 542
Macchio, Ralph 147
Mackie, Bob 19
MacKinnon, Catharine 52, 111
Maddin, Guy 460
Madonna 14, 15, 249
Madsen, Michael 203
Magnifique, Le 387
'Mahabharata, The' (performance) 132
Make Them Die Slowly 96
Making of Guinea Pig 95
Mamet, David 121, 139
Man Bites Dog 31
Man from U.N.C.L.E., The 365
Manhattan's Cinema Village 47
Maniac 77, 144, 191, 192, 194, 195, 199–201, 204
Maniac 2 141, 143
Maniac Cop 195
Mann, Danny 367
Mannix, Dan 72
Mann, Thomas 274
Manorexia (band) 471
Man's Best 330, 331
Manson, Charles 43, 45, 79, 90, 434
'Manson Family' 35
Manson, Marilyn 290, 296, 305, 307, 308, 535
Mantegna, Joey 120
Marceau, Marcel 276, 543
Marco, Paul 535
Margheriti, Antonio 266
Mark of the Astro-Zombies 373
Mark of the Devil 249
Marleen, Lili 257, 264
de Sade, Marquis 132
Married with Children 441
Martin 413
Martinelli, Giovanni 296
Martinelli, Greg 120, 136
Martin, John 38, 42
'Mask Maker' (performance) 276
Mask of Satan, The (see *Black Sunday*) 536
Mask, The 118
Mason, Connie 534
Masonna (band) 471
Masque, the (venue) 484–486, 489, 490
Massey, Raymond 282
Master Musicians of Jajouka (band) 235
Masterpiece Theater 132
Matrix, The 437
Matshikiza, John 430, 432
Matsumura, Katsuya 526
McAdams, Anne 544
McCarthy, Joe 117
McClure, Michael 269
McCormick, Catherine 256
McCoy, Carl 423
McDowell, Curt 544
McFarland, Hayley 550
Meat Cake (pub) 439, 443, 448, 450, 457, 461
Meat Cake (performance) 457
Medea 254, 260
Medusa Pictures 201
Meet the Feebles 52, 396
Megson, Neil (see also P-Orridge, Genesis Breyer) 226, 228
Mekas, Jonas 57, 208
Méliès, Georges 528
Melvins, the (band) 466
Men Behind the Sun 56
Mentors, the (band) 492
Mercer, Vic 36
Merhige, Elias 251
Merrill Books 439, 459
Merzbow (band) 247, 466, 471
Metallica (band) 90, 465
Metgumbnerbone (band) 104
Metzger, Radley 414, 541
Meyer, Russ 56, 348, 367, 370, 507
Michell, John 72
Middleton, Charles 542
Midler, Bette 335
Midnight In Moscow (track) 360
Midnight Video 99
Mifune 251
Mikels, Ted V. 90, 365, 370, 374
Miles, George 320, 322, 323
Milky 468
Miller, Penny 421
Milligan, Andy 544
'Million Dollar Movie' 76
Milstead, Harris Glenn (see also Divine) 7
Mineo, Sal 417
'Ministry of Health' 398
Minnesota Renaissance festival 166
Minsky, Harold 360, 371
'Minuet in G for Tuned Trash Cans' (performance) 165
Minutemen (band) 488
Miranda, Soledad 537, 538
Misérables, Les 133
'Miss Jackie' 227, 247, 248
Modern Vampires 259
Moebius (see Giraud, Jean)
Molfeta's restaurant 166
Monde de l'Art gallery, Le 221
Mondo 2000 (pub) 400
Monkees, the (band) 319
Moore, Alan 449
Moore, Thurston 449
Moormon, Charlotte 278
Morghen, John 530, 531
Morley, Rita 413
Morricone, Ennio 425
Morris, Marc 532, 546
Morrison, Jim 430
Morrison, Steven (see Watkins, Roger)
Morrissey, Paul 251, 262, 270
Mors Syphilitica (band) 439
Mortal Sins 120, 136
Mortiis (band) 466
Moschen, Michael 166
Moskito—Der Schänder (aka *Mosquito—The Desecrater*) 55
Motel Hell 77
Mother's Day 51
Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) 134, 195
Motor Psycho 368
Mould, Bob 329, 335
Moulin Rouge 357
'Moulin Ruse Affair, The' (see also *Girl from U.N.C.L.E., The*) 365
Mr. Klein (track) 260
'Mrs. Lonsberry's Seance of Horror' (performance) 170
Ms. 45 204, 533
MTV 203, 448, 457, 465, 489
Mueller-Stahl, Armin 265
Mühl, Otto 57, 212
Murawski, Bob 197
Murnau, F. W. 507
Murray, Jan 417
Murrin, Tom 480–487, 491, 494
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) 256
Mütter, Thomas Dent 518, 519
Mütter museum 185, 186, 310, 518, 519
My Loose Thread (pub) 316, 324, 327
My Own Private Idaho 259, 260
My Sweet Satan 35, 42, 44, 100, 536
My Wall (track) 474
My Winnipeg 460
MZ412 (band) 466
Nahon, Philippe 394, 400
Naked Lunch 41
Napalm Death (band) 96
Napoleon Dynamite 441
Nárcisz és Psyché 266
Naschy, Paul 92
Nation, Marty 27
Neill, Sam 533
Nekromantik, 30, 43, 54, 91, 94, 527
Nekromantik 2 54
Nelson, Benny 471
Nesmith, Michael 529, 530
New Adventures of Pinocchio, The 254
Newman, Barry 260
New School (venue) 305
Newsweek (pub) 303
New Visions award 516
'New World Review, The'

(performance) 410
New York film festival 377
New York Press (pub) 449
New York Ripper, The 53
New York's Millenium Film Archive 47
New York Times (pub) 415
New York Underground film festival 23, 35, 47, 56, 100, 511
Nicholson, Jack 11
Nicolau, Ted 125
Nielsen, Brigitte 261
Nietzsche, Friedrich 211
Night of the Living Dead 76
Night of the Hunted, The 542
Nine Inch Nails (band) 535
Ninth and Hell Street (pub) 78, 86
Ninth Configuration, The 435
Nirvana (band) 539
Nitsch, Hermann 114, 207, 205–225
Nobody Gets Born in St. Petersburg 417
Noé, Gaspar 376–400, 507, 516
Norris, Bill 118, 124
Northanger Abbey 132
Northern Exposure 195
Nosferatu 264, 549
Nothing Lasts Forever 479
Nuclear Assault (band) 96
Nuit du Traquées, La (see *Night of the Hunted, The*)
Nu ji zhong ying (see *Bamboo House of Dolls*)
Nurse with Wound (band) 471
Nuytten, Bruno 533
NYPD Blue 120
Oak Mot (pub) 506
O'Brien, Pat 418
O'Connolly, Jim 540
O'Connor, Sinéad 425
Oddo, Steven 146
Odessa restaurant 226
Ôedo Reipuman (see *Rapeman of Edo, The*)
Off the Deep End (pub) 64, 72
O'Haver, Tommy 550
Oldman, Gary 203
O'Malley, Stephen 462–477
Om (band) 464
Omen, The 90, 193
OM Theater (see Orgies Mysteries Theater)
Once Upon a Body 547
Once Upon a Time in the West 425
Only Words (pub) 111
Ono, Yoko 221, 286–288
Onyx Café 494
Ooru naito rongu 3 (see *All Night Long 3: The Final Chapter*)
ØØ Void (album) 462, 474
Orbach, Jerry 417
Orbison, Roy 230
Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) 65, 473
O Records 16
Orgies Mysteries Theatre 216, 217
Origins of Consciousness in the Bicameral Mind, The (pub) 237
Orkly Kid, The 512
Orlando, Bobby 16
O'Toole, Peter 127
Our Man Flint 370
Outside International Art Competition 221
O'Williams, Wendy 490
Page, Ellen 550
Paik, Nam June 278
Palace films 425
Palahniuk, Chuck 396
Pale Rider 428
Pandora's Aquarium (track) 457
Panic (performance) 274, 276, 278, 281, 282, 284
Panik (pub) 4
Paoli, Dennis 115–139
Parasite (pub) 105, 110, 112
'Para-Troupe' (performance) 482
Parfrey, Adam 101, 510
Parker, Olivia 519
Parsifal (opera) 224
Pasolini, Pier Paolo 112
Paths of Glory 392
Pauline, Mark 67, 492
PBS 182
Penderecki, Krzysztof 305
Penguin Books 439, 459
Penn, Arthur 171
Pennies from Heaven 544
Penn, Sean 15
Pennsylvania Ballet 177
Penn & Teller Get Killed 171
Penthouse (pub) 113
People (pub) 333
Percy, Lee 131
Perdita Durango (see *Dance with the Devil*)
Perez, Rosie 538, 539
Performance 420
Period (pub) 326–333, 337
Peterson, Charles 25
Petrarch, Francesco 212
Phantom Carriage, The 476
Phenomena 431
Phillips, Todd 31, 47, 57
Phoenix, River 259
Phoenix theater 168
Picasso, Paloma 525
Pickens, Slim 534
Piece of Mind (pub) 84
Pierro, Marina 532
Pike Place Market 481
PiL (band) 490, 529
Pink Flamingos 12
Pink Pussycat (venue) 365
Pipers Alley theater 274
Pirates of the Caribbean 184
Pita (band) 476
Pit and the Pendulum, The 125, 126
Pittman, Marc 536
Plague Mass (album) 305
Plan 9 from Outer Space 532, 535
Plasma films 39, 86
Playgirl (pub) 468
Playhouse 90 171
Plugz, the (band) 485
Poetry and Purgatory (pub) 149
Poison 459
Poison (band) 96
Polanski, Roman 305, 507, 533
Poli, Maurice 545
Poltergeist 531
Polyester 12
Poor White Trash Part 2 (see *Scum of the Earth*)
Pop, Iggy 425, 488, 529
P-Orridge, Genesis Breyer 70, 226–248
P-Orridge, Genesse 248
Possession 532, 533
Post-Intelligencer (pub) 481
Pound, Ezra 167
Preminger, Otto 269
Presley, Elvis 364, 375, 430
Presley, Priscilla 365
Price, Andre 420
Price, Vincent 126
'Princess Do May' 362
Prince, Tom 59
Princeton University theater 167
Prochnow, Jürgen 265
Prometheus Rising (pub) 399
Propaganda (pub) 445
Proto Records 16
Prujan, Turk 357
PS1 (venue) 72
Psychic TV (band) 226, 231–235, 244, 248
Psycho 85
Psychopathia Sexualis (album) 103
Psychotronic (pub) 42, 99
Puchalski, Steve 519, 520
Pullman, Bill 198
Pulp Amer 388, 389, 391
Punk (pub) 485
Puppet Master V 85
Purcell, Rosamond 518
Pure (pub) 101–105, 107, 110
Pynchon, Thomas 320
Quadra Entertainment 195
Quaid, Evi 256
Quaid, Randy 256
Queen of Blood 547
Rabid 542
Rabid Dogs 545
Radcliffe college 214
Radigue, Eliane 474
Rahway State Prison 200
Raimi, Sam 40, 204, 535
Rainbow Thief 289
Rainone, Tom 517
Rambo 130
Ramones (band) 529
Ramsey, JonBenét 521
Ranaldo, Lee 329
Ransone, Key 314
Rape 286
Rapeman of Edo, The 527
Rat Catching (pub) 506
Rat Patrol 500
Ray, Nicholas 203
Reagan, Ronald 237, 518
Re-Animator 45, 77, 115, 118, 120, 121, 123, 124, 129, 131, 135
Re-Animator 2 125
Redemption (pub) 303, 311
Redemption films 523
Redgrave, Vanessa 550
Redneck Ozone Mutants 86
Reed, Oliver 550
Reeve, Christopher 120
Reeves, Keanu 259
Regnoli, Piero 543
Rehburg, Peter 471, 475
Relentless 203, 204
Rendezvous, the (venue) 360
Renegade Soundwave (track) 423
Repo Man 529, 530
Requiem for a Vampire 539, 546
Requiem pour un Vampire (see *Requiem for a Vampire*)
Reservoir Dogs 202
Reversal of Fortune 131
Richards, Ben 519
Richardson, Sy 530
Richter, Hans 57
Rifkin, Adam 94, 95
Rimbaud, Arthur 268, 320
Ring of the Nibelung, The (opera) 224
Rites of Passage 422, 423
River's Edge 501, 503
Roadkill 38, 39, 42, 43, 44
Robbe-Grillet, Alain 521
Robbins, Tim 264
Roberts, Larry 512
Robertson, Dale 360
Robin Hood 126
Robinson, Eugene 34
Rocketeer, The 125
Rodriguez, Julio 525
Rogers, Wayne 371
Rollerderby (pub) 439, 444
Rolling Stones (band) 77
Rollin, Jean 521, 532, 538–542, 546
Rollins, Henry 34, 66
Romay, Lina 521, 530
Romero, George A. 76
Romper Stomper 31
Rooker, Michael 148
Rose, Jim (see also Jim Rose Circus Sideshow) 59, 66
Ross, Gene 544
Roth, Tim 145, 147
Rourke, Mickey 395
Routh, Brian 494
Roux, Amelia 436
Rubin & Ed 503
Rubinstein, Zelda 531
Rude Shape Books 101

Rudolph, Alan 7, 11
Runaways, the (band) 296
Running Man, The 519
Russo, James 148
Ruthless People 198
Ryder, Winona 454
Saatchi, Doris Lockhart 392
Sabre Dance (track) 165
Sacks, Alan 491
Sacred Heart, The: An Atlas of the Body Seen Through Invasive Surgery (pub) 519
Sacred Mountain, The (see *Holy Mountain, The*) 278
Sägebrecht, Marianne 435
Salomé 523, 524
Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom 112
Salzburg Connection 260, 269
Sanders, Ed 79
San Francisco Art Institute 440, 441
San Francisco Ball 546, 547
San Francisco Chronicle (pub) 157
Santa Claus Conquers the Martians 19
Santa Sangre 274, 289, 431
Saragossa Manuscript, The 529
Satana, Devilon 361
Satana, Tura 348–375
Sato, Jason 335
Satyricon (pub) 181
Sawyer, Dianne 316
Scarabée d'or catalog, Le 114
Scheisskerl 57
Schiller, Tom 479
Schlingensief, Christoph 54
Schloss, Zander 530
Schmickler, Marcus 471
Schoeck, Othmar 164, 165
Schomburg, Mark 59
Schönherr, Johannes 46–57
School's Out (track) 112
Schopenhauer, Arthur 211, 224
Schow, David 84
Schramm 42
Schrei X (album) 305
Schwarzenegger, Arnold 130, 265, 271, 396
Schwarzkogler, Rudolf 212
Schweiger, Til 265
Schygulla, Hanna 264
Score 541
Scott, Ridley 131
Scott, Tony 203
Scream (band) 467
Screamers, the (band) 486
Screem (pub) 4, 141, 163
Scum of the Earth 544
Se7en 327
'Seance, The' (performance) 170
Seattle International film festival 19, 41, 45, 252
Seattle Times (pub) 481
Seconds (pub) 33
Selby, Mary 525
Selfish, Little (pub) 101
Semaforo Rosso (see *Rabid Dogs*)
Serious, Ted 182
Seul Contre Tous 385, 389, 391–396, 397, 398, 399
Sex and the City 450
Sex and the Vampire (see *Shiver of the Vampires*) 538
Sexgang, Andi 431
Sex Oasis 331
Sex Pistols (band) 77
S'Express (band) 423
Sex (pub) 249, 266
Shadow of the Vampire 251, 254
Shaft 194
Shapiro Glickenhaus Entertainment 201
Shaw, Sir Run Run 524
She-Devils on Wheels 529
Sheen, Charlie 94, 95
Shepherd, Sam 480
She's Back 149
Shining, The 527
Shit of God, The (pub) 305
Shiver of the Vampires 538
Shock Cinema (pub) 520
Showtime 171
Shulman, Marcia 148
Siegel, Don 203
Sigismondi, Floria 296–313
Silence of the Lambs, The 346
Sills, Paul 116
Silverchair (band) 330
Silver Slipper (venue) 370
Simonetti, Claudio 431
Siouxsie and the Banshees (band) 455
Sitges film festival 515, 550
'Six-Day-Play' (performance) 207, 216, 225
Six Teeth, The 263
Sizemore, Tom 174
Sjöstrom, Victor 476
Skal, David J. 549
Skinny Puppy (band) 40, 536
Skouras, Spyros 418
Slash (pub) 485
Slater, Christian 203
Sleepy Hollow 259, 540
Slice of Life 146
Slimetime: A Guide to Sleazy, Mindless Movies (pub) 520
Slint (band) 466
Sloan Gallery 446
Small Cruel Party (band) 314
Smith, Carter 330
Smith, Gary Blair 35, 39, 41, 43, 81
Smith, Shawn 517
Smith, Stunning 362
Smith, Van 12
Smith, William 193, 194
Smoller, Fred 125
Snyder, Tom 43
Soavi, Michele 431
S.O.B. 543
Sodomites 397, 398
'Soiled Bedding' (performance) 496
Soisson, Joel 200
Solo, Bob 128
Solomon International Pictures (see also Quadra Entertainment) 195
Solondz, Todd 388
Sonic Youth (band) 449
Sonnenfeld, Barry 260
Son of Dracula 76
Son of Frankenstein 76, 85
Son of Kong 76
Son of the Wolfman 76
Sons of El Topo 290
Soo, Chung Ling 184
Sophocles 167
Sopranos, The 307, 538
Sotos, Peter 101–115, 521, 522
Sound of Music, The 501
Sounds of Death (pub) 83, 84
Southern Lord records 476
Spartacus 392
Spasmolytic (track) 40, 41, 536
Speakman, Jeff 197, 198
Spears, Britney 394, 444
Special (pub) 101
Speck, Richard 105
Speed 130
Spellcaster 125
Spiegel, Sam 161
Spielberg, Steven 251, 265, 325, 502, 503
Spinell, Joe 141, 143
Spin (pub) 34
Spiral, Skippy 455
Spree 204
Springer, Jerry 531
Squid Row (venue) 66
SRL (see Survival Research Laboratories)
Stage 1 (venue) 481
Stage Fright 431
Stahl, Pete 467
Stamp, Terence 254
Stanley, Richard 338, 419–438
Stanton, Harry Dean 529
Stapleton, Steven 471
Starck, Dr. Ray van 70
Starship Troopers 259
Star Trek 202, 359
Stationmaster's Wife, The 264
St. Camile, Marc 525
St. Cyr, Lili 360
Steal This Book (pub) 71
Stebmo 468
Steele, Barbara 537
Steiger, Rod 259
Stein, Lola 254
Step Right Up! (pub) 72
Sterling, Matt 335
Stern (pub) 264
Stevenson, Jack 23, 43, 47, 50, 88
Stewart, Steven C. 502, 511, 512, 514
St. John, Archer 407
St. John, Nick 128, 137
Stone, Sharon 454
Strand Releasing 495
Strangler of the Swamp 542
Streisand, Barbra 11, 335
Strindberg, August 281
Strömberg, Ewa 537, 538
Stroud, Don 538, 539
Submit to Me 30
SubPop 25
Suckdog (band) 444
Sui, Anna 454
Sukowa, Barbara 264
Sullivan, Ed 500
Sullivan, Rick 93, 97, 146
Sundance film festival 516
Sunn O))) (band) (see also O'Malley, Stephen) 462, 466, 468, 470, 472, 474–477
Sun Times (pub) 483
Sun Video 527, 528
Superfly Guy (track) 423
Survival Research Laboratories (SRL) 492
Survivor 519
Švankmajer, Jan 535, 536
Svenson, Arne 518
Sykes, Jesse 471
Synapse films 536, 537, 538
Szabo, Istvan 264
Szulkin, David A. 522, 523
Truth or Dare 99
Tall Blond Man with One Black Shoe, The 387
Tamerlis, Zoë 533
Tarantino, Quentin 185, 202, 203
Tarantula 77
Tartan films 476
Tate, Sharon 541
Taylor, Meschach 120
Taymor, Julie 266
Teller 162–189
Tempe Entertainment 45
Tenant, The 305, 533
Tenderness of the Wolves 110
Tenebrae 92
Ténèbres (pub) 519
Terminal Velocity 203
Terminator, The 130
Tesla, Nikola 59, 67
Tex and the Horse Heads (band) 492
Texas Chain Saw Massacre, The 41, 55, 76, 545
Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2, The 51
'Theater of the Absurd' (performance) 480
'Theater of the Ridiculous' (performance) 480

Thee Majesty (band) 235, 236, 240, 241, 244, 247
Theoretical, the (venue) 490, 493
They Came from Within 542
Things to Come 282
'Thinker, The' 280
Thinking Big 544
Third Generation, The 264
Thirlwell, Jim Foetus 23
Thomas, Victoria 530
Thompson, Robert 110
Thorr's Hammer (band) 466, 467, 477
Thrasher, Larry 247, 248
Three Men and a Baby 387
Throbbing Gristle (band) 103, 226, 231, 232, 237, 240, 243
Thundercrack! 56, 545
Thunder's Mouth Press 146, 149
Thurman, Uma 257
Time (pub) 77, 303, 305
Timpone, Tony 84
Tin Drum, The 257
Tintorella de Luna 387, 388, 390
'Tiny Tim' 453
'Tis Pity She's a Whore 412
Titan Books 520
Titus 266
Tobin, Amon 300
Tohill, Cathal 520
Tokatyan, Leon 417
Tokyo Shock film 526
Tombs, Pete 520, 525
Too Much Flesh 263
Tool (pub) 107
Topor, Roland 274, 276, 279
Top Secret (see also *Salzburg Connection*) 260
Tormentor (band) 27
Torture and Torment of Christian Martyrs (pub) 510
'Torture King' (see Zamora)
Tourniquet (track) 308
Tower of Evil 540
Trancers IV 85
Trancers V 85
Transgression 524, 525
Trapped 96
Trap Them and Kill Them 92
Trash 251
Trashfilm Roadshows (pub) 47
Travel and Leisure (pub) 186
Travis, Guy 435
Travous, Dale 59, 462
Treasure of the Sierra Madre 436
Trentin, Claudine 398
Tribune Corps 148
Tricky 312
Trier, Lars von 249–252, 257, 260, 263, 271, 290, 382
Trinka, Paul 370
Triumph of the Will 48
Trocadero (venue) 358
Troma films 38, 142, 143
Trouble in Mind 7, 13
True Gore 88
True Lies 130, 131
True Romance 200, 202
Truffaut, François 171
Trump, Donald 177
Try (pub) 324, 326, 327, 330, 334
'Tube, the' (see Crowley, Matt)
Tucker 433
Tudor, Ray 413
'Tumescoes, the' (performance) 166
Tumor Humour (pub) 443
Tupperwares, the (band) 492
Turn of the Century 452, 453
Tusk 289
Tutti, Cosey Fanni 226
TVT Records 248
Twin Peaks 441
Twins 40
Twister 501
Twisting The Night Away (track) 16
Two Thousand Maniacs! 534, 535
Type O Negative (band) 468
Uesug, Naoki 527
Unbelievable Truth, The 430
Uncle Sam 192, 194, 195, 201
Unger, Deborah 148
Universal Studios 529, 549
Vaccaro, John 480
Vachal, Josef 528
Vachon, Christine 330
Vajda, Marjan 55
Valley of Gwangi 77
Valley of the Dolls 541
Vampira 535
Vampire Thrills (see *Shiver of the Vampires*)
Vampyros Lesbos 537
VanBebber, Jim 30, 35–45, 54, 57, 81, 100, 536
Vanishing Hitchhiker, The (pub) 428
Vathek (pub) 132
VCI Entertainment 544
Velvet Underground (band) 320
Velvet Goldmine 459
Venables, Jon 110
Venice film festival 516
Venture Bros., The 439
Vercoutere, Marcel 518
Vermeer, Johannes 81
Vernon, Howard 268
Vernon, Sherri 371
Verow, Todd 328, 329
Vertigo 545
Vestron Pictures 149
'Veterans Bedside Network' (performance) 408
Viacom 448
Victoria & Albert Museum 11
Victor/Victoria 543
Videodrome 40, 77
Video Watchdog (pub) 90, 518, 530, 537, 538
Vienne, Gisèle 475
Vigilante 191, 194, 195, 203
Vigilante 2 204
Village Voice (pub) 287
Vinterberg, Thomas 251
Violation of Claudia, The 204
viol du vampire, Le 521
Violent Shit I 86
Violent Shit II 86
Violette, Banks 469
Virgin records 425
Virgins and Vampires (see *Requiem for a Vampire*)
Viskin, Roberto 284
Viva El Muerte 290
Voice of the Moon 426, 431
Void Books 101
Voyage of the Rock Aliens 19
Vraney, Mike 534
Wagner, Richard 224
Wai, Wong Kar 507
Walas, Chris 495
Walcott, Gregory 535
Walken, Christopher 137, 203
Walk Like A Man (track) 16
Wallace, Jack 120
Walter, Tracey 530
Wandscher, Phil 471
Warhol, Andy 228, 230, 249, 266, 484, 492, 521, 524
Warm 330
Warner Bros. 128, 129, 365
Waters, John 11, 14, 19, 20, 45, 100, 103, 329, 388, 395, 481, 507
Watkins, Roger (see also Janos, Victor) 527
Watson, Tex 45
Weintraub, Murray 365
Weintraub, Sy 365
Welles, Orson 137, 150, 157, 158, 507, 538, 540
Wells, H. G. 282
Wenders, Wim 266
Went, Johanna 478–497
Werkstattkino (venue) 50, 51, 54, 55
Wes Craven's Last House on the Left: The Making of a Cult Classic (pub) 522, 523
West, Fred 110
Whale, James 76, 549
What is it? 499, 502, 508–511, 513, 516
What Makes Sammy Run? 416
Wheaton, Brock 486
Wheaton, Mark 486, 494
Whiskey Town (band) 471
Whispers in the Dark 148
White1 (album) 474
White Darkness, The 438
Whitehouse (band) 101, 102, 103, 471
White Jr., Josh 116
Who Killed Teddy Bear? 401, 410, 416, 418, 500
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? 533
Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed? 367
Wicked Games 99
Wicked films 426
Wiene, Robert 529
Wild at Heart 430, 501, 538
Wilder, Billy 365
Willard 504
William Peter Blatty On The Exorcist: From Novel To Film (pub) 518
Williams, Billy Dee 127
Williams, Dave 24
Williams, Lori 368
Williams, Wade 532, 535
Willis, Bruce 265
Wilson, Robert Anton 65, 399
Wisbar, Frank 507, 542
Wishman, Doris 52
Witkin, Joel-Peter 519
Wittenstein, Alyce 50
Wolfman, The 549
Wolf, Sarondae 59, 66
Wolverine Blues (album) 466
Wood Jr., Edward 532, 535
Wood, Natalie 259
Woodstock festival 81
Wood, Thomas 534
Woo, John 53
Woolley, Steve 425
Worden, Gretchen 186, 188, 189, 518, 519
World as Will and Representation, The (pub) 224
World Trade Center 423
Wrightson, Berni 127
WWF (World Wrestling Federation) 531
'Xavier's Sense Trances' (performance) 212
X, Malcolm 286
Yeux Sans Visage, Les 520
Yonemoto, Norman 334
York, Francine 371
You Can Count on Me 330
Young, Galen 23
You Think You're A Man (track) 16
Yuzna, Brian 119, 135
Zadora, Pia 18, 19
Zamora 58–74
Zamora, Del 530
Z'Dar, Robert 201
Zedd, Nick 28, 48, 50, 52
Zeman, Karel 507
Zentropa 257, 263
Z'ev 484, 485, 486
Ze Whiz Kidz (performance) 492
Zombie 91, 517
Zombie Book (pub) 97
Zulawski, Andrzej 532
Zweig, Alan 40, 78

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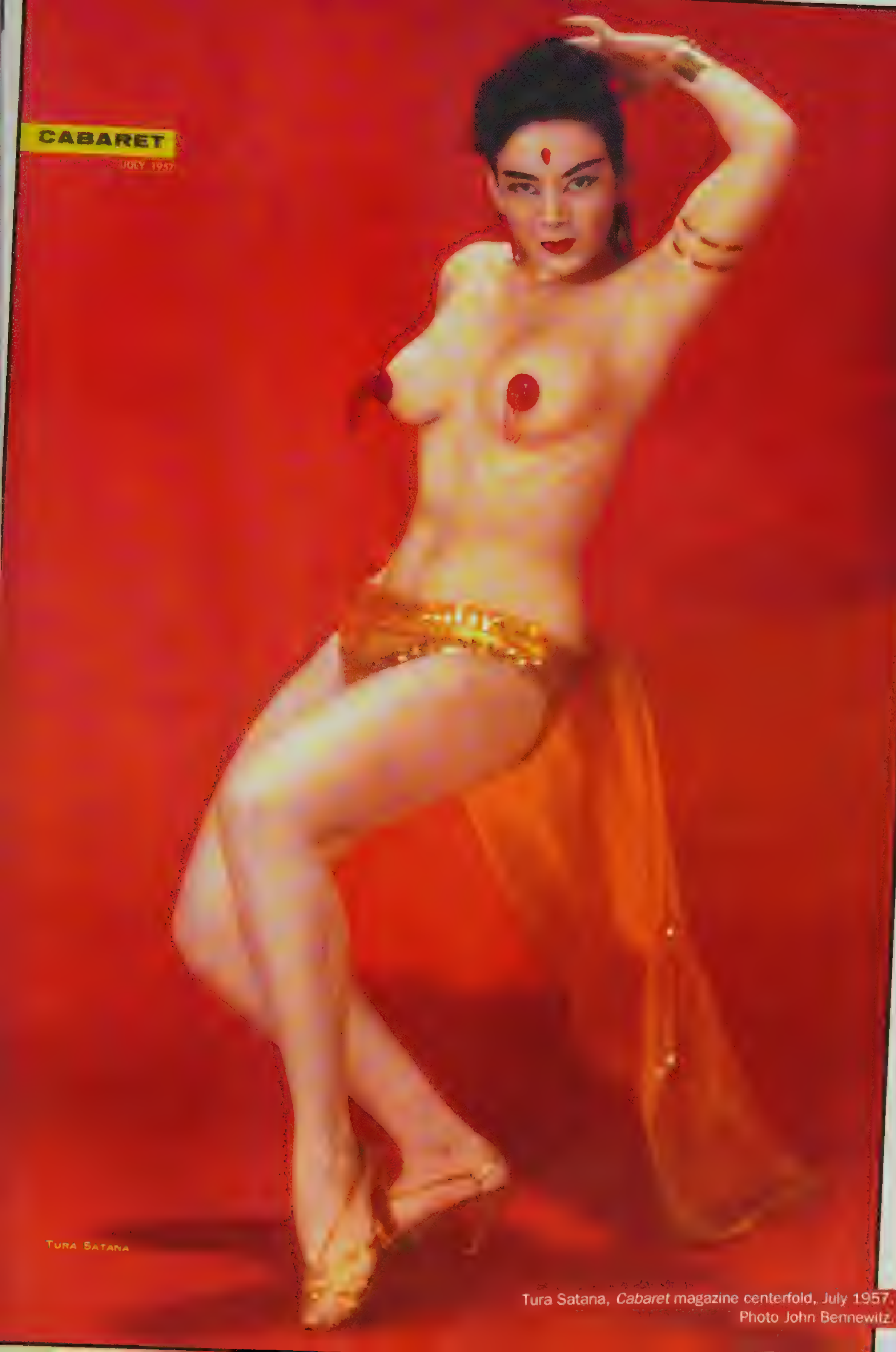
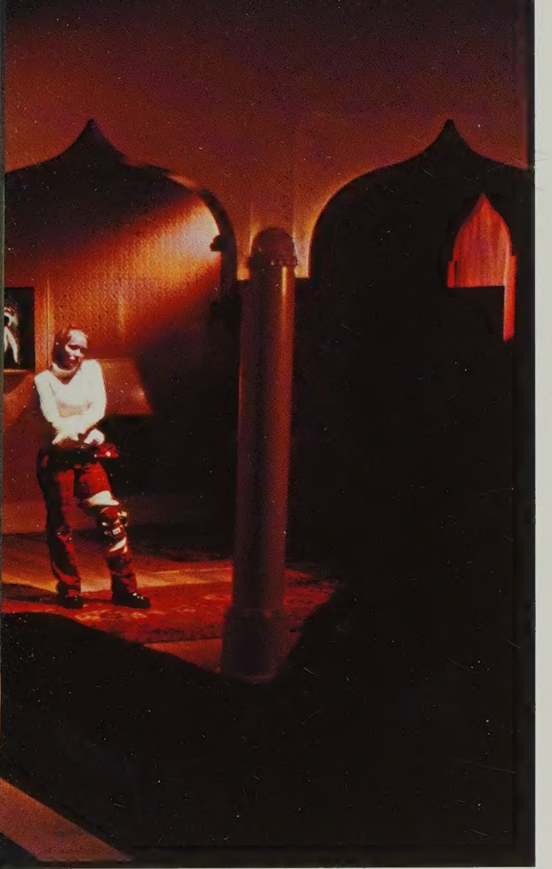
AUTHOR BIO: Throughout 2009 and 2010, Shade Rupe produced the Deep Red International Festival of Fantastic Film in Seattle and Portland, programmed the 26th Olympia Film Festival, served as Chairman of the International Jury at the 15th Lund International Festival of Fantastic Film in southern Sweden, curated a weekend film festival at Sundance, coproduced the four-city Ken Russell tour Russellmania! along with Fantasia, Lincoln Center, the American Cinematheque, and *Rue Morgue*, wrote the feature film *Fear Factory in 3-D*, was a guest at the Night Visions festival in Helsinki, and completed this book. He also edited the acclaimed *Funeral Party* journals and has done a mess of other stuff. A few of his favorite films are *Performance*, *The Devils*, *Zardoz*, *All That Jazz*, *Stardust Memories*, and *The Hourglass Sanitorium*, and favorite musicians he's seen live include Whitehouse, Krzysztof Penderecki, Gary Numan, The Master Musicians of Bukkake, Diamanda Galás, and The Black Angels. He travels a lot and shares a Manhattan apartment with an actor and a chinchilla.

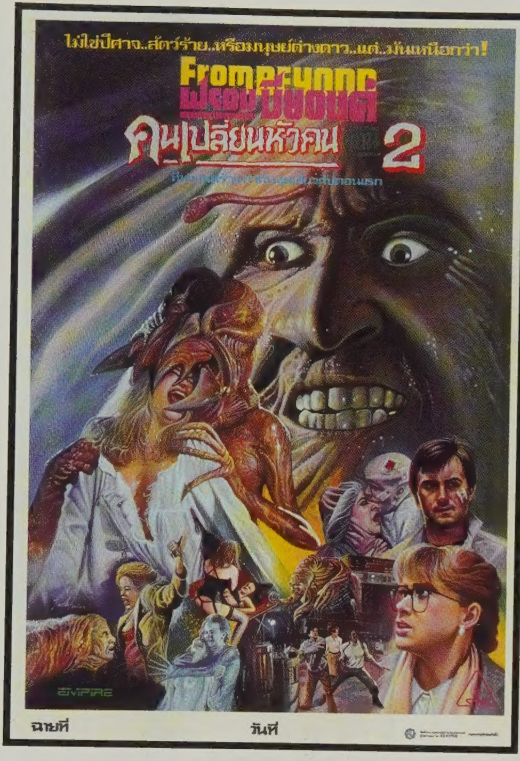
INTERVIEW DATES: Divine: March 3, 1986; Richard Kern: July 13, 1993; Jim VanBebber: January 1994; Johannes Schönherr: 1994; Timm Grimm: 1994; Chas. Balun: March 24, 1994; Peter Sotos: August 20, 1994; Dennis Paoli: August 24, 1994; Buddy Giovinazzo: 1995; Brother Theodore: January 1996; Teller: June 1997; William Lustig: 1997; Hermann Nitsch: November 1999 & March 2004; Genesis Breyer P-Orridge: December 1999; Udo Kier: January 16, 2000; Alejandro Jodorowsky: August 23, 2000; Floria Sigismondi: May 2001; Dennis Cooper: October 28, 2002; Andre Lassen: November 24, 2002; Tura Satana: March 31, 2003; Gaspar Noé: November 23, 2003; Richard Stanley: February 2004; Arnold Drake: September 16, 2005; Dame Darcy: June 30, 2008; Stephen O'Malley: November 13, 2008; Crispin Glover: February 5, 2010; Johanna Went: February 20, 2010.

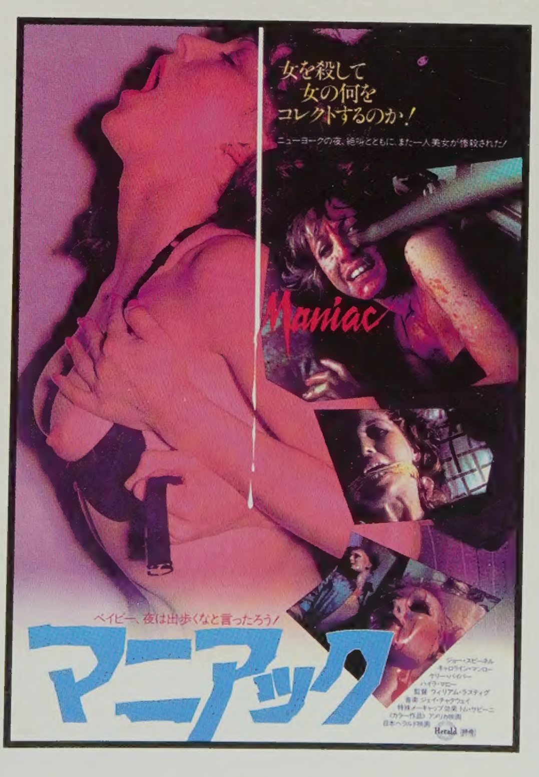

CABARET
JULY 1957
TURA SATANA

Tura Satana, *Cabaret* magazine centerfold, July 1957.
Photo John Bennewitz.

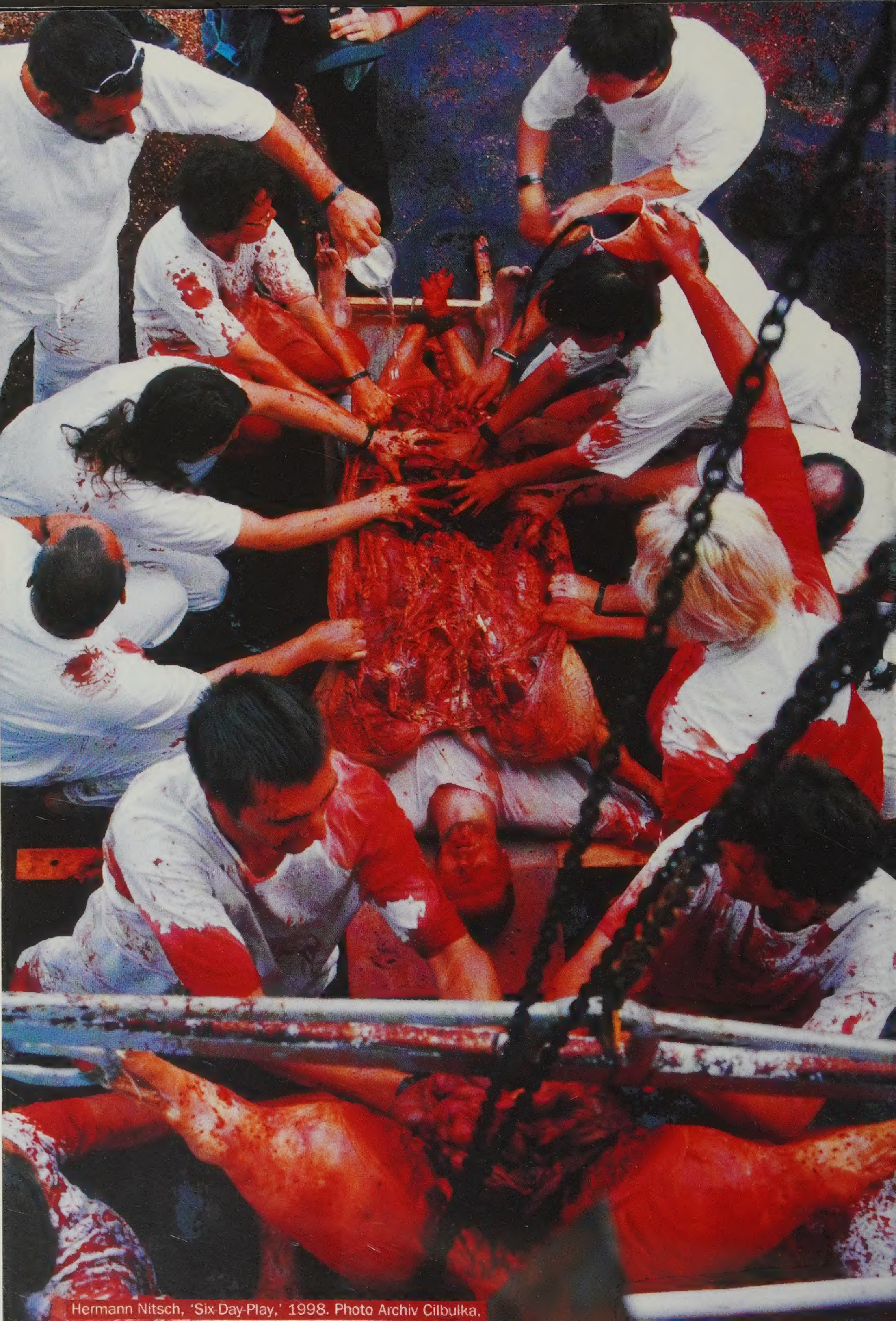
Top: A scene from Crispin Glover's *It is fine! EVERYTHING IS FINE.* Courtesy Volcanic Eruptions.
Bottom: 'Peeing', 2008. Photos Richard Kern.




ไม่ใช่ปีศาจ..สัตว์ร้าย..หรือมนุษย์ต่างดาว..แต่..มันเหนือกว่า!
From Beyond
ฟรอม บียอนด์
คนเปลี่ยนหัวคน 2
EMPIRE
ฉายที่
วันที่


女を殺して
女の何を
コレクトするのか！
ニューヨークの夜、絶叫とともに、また一人美女が惨殺された！
Maniac
ベイビー、夜は出歩くなと言ったろう！
マニアック
ジョー・スピーネル
キャロライン・マンロー
ケリー・パイパー
ハイラ・マロー
監督 ウィリアム・ラスティグ
音楽 ジェイ・チャタウェイ
特殊メーキャップ効果 トム・サビーニ
《カラー作品》アメリカ映画
日本ヘラルド映画
Herald

Right, from top: Thai poster for Stuart Gordon's *From Beyond*, written by Dennis Paoli, and Japanese poster for William Lustig's *Maniac*.



Hermann Nitsch, 'Six-Day-Play,' 1998. Photo Archiv Cilbulka.

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ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY CONJURES PSYCHOMAGIC
STEPHEN O'MALLEY SHATTERS THE SUNN O)))
THE TORTURE KING SKEWS AND SKEWERS
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